

# In His Shadow Creations

Advancing God's Kingdom through the Worship Arts

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## A Biblical Foundation for Artists and the Arts

### **As Artists and Christians do we have a valid reason or purpose to create?**

God's revelation of himself through the scriptures is full of stories, parables, metaphors, allegories, songs, poetry and images. Because God is an Artist, He communicates truth in creative ways. The Bible truly is a work of art!

*Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

The first characteristic God reveals to us about himself is that he is creative. The original artist! Creativity is an essential part of God's divine nature.

### **Art at its best is a shared experience.**

As we read on we discover that this creativity required collaboration with the Word and the Spirit.

*Gen 1:2-3 And the earth was without form and empty. And darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters. (3) And God said, Let there be light. And there was light.*

This says something to us about the best method of creating. We need to be sons of God who are filled with his Spirit. Declaring and living the truth of the Word become flesh and dwelling among us.

### **Why did God create?**

God wanted to be worshipped and adored. He wanted something that would reflect His glory.

*Psa 19:1b The heavens declare the glory of God; and the expanse proclaims His handiwork.*

This is one of the purposes of Art. To reflect God's glory.

God created every living thing out of the environment it was meant to live in, and to return to when it died.

When God created man He was created in His image. The language of Art is understood across cultures; this universal language and tool of communication illustrates that all human beings are a reflection of the one who 'formed' them. God spoke to Himself to create man. The environment we were created to live in is the presence of God.

*Gen 1:26-27 And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over all the creepers creeping on the earth. Gen 1:27 And God created man in His image; in the image of God He created him. He created them male and female.*

*Gen 2:7 And Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*

Man's body is created from the dust of the ground where his body goes when it dies and God breathed His spirit into man, which returns to Him when man's body dies.

God walked with man in the garden. When man fell he was expelled from the presence of God.

### **What is God's plan to restore man?**

Fast forward in the Bible to Exodus 24-31 Moses gets revelation of the restoration process. God tells him in verse 31 to set aside Bezaleel to create the tabernacle and all of its furnishings.

Strong's Lexicon says the meaning of Bezaleel is: In the shadow of God or after the character of God. *Exo 31:2 Behold, I, I have called by name Bezaleel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah.*

Bezaleel is one of the first artists mentioned in the Bible.

*Exo 31:3 And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all workmanship,*

*Exo 31:4 to devise designs; to work in gold, and in silver, and in bronze,*

*Exo 31:5 and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all workmanship.*

Here again we see a collaboration of man with the Spirit of God.

Being an artist in the Kingdom of God is a spiritual calling.

### **Principle of first mention.**

In Biblical scholarship first mention sets up the standard for all that follows.

Bezaleel first man to be mentioned that was filled with the Spirit of God.

Bezaleel according to Ancient Historical Hebrew texts was only 12 years old at this time!

So what was it that he was commissioned to create? It was *an environment by which mankind can once again be restored to the presence of God.*

So we see from this example that another purpose of artists is to create environments to restore mankind to the presence of God. Environments that draw us to Him!

The Tabernacle is a prophetic picture of what is to come in the sacrifice of Jesus the Lamb of God, the Word become flesh for our redemption.

This is another purpose of the arts, *to represent things that are not yet apparent in the natural realm.*

Below is an excerpt from *Beholding the Glory, Incarnation Through the Arts*, edited by Jeremy Begie; segment by Trevor Hart

“The creative authority of the Word who becomes flesh is of a sort which, while it certainly sets boundaries to the legitimate and possible expressions of human freedom, none the less creates space for, facilitates, and deliberately seeks the responsible exercise of such freedom in every sphere of human life. Responsible creativity of an artistic sort is thus not only warranted, but may be viewed as an unconditional obligation laid upon us and called forth by God's gracious speaking to humankind in the life, death and resurrection of his son. Indeed we may go further and suggest that it is not only a proper response to but also an active sharing in ...God's own creative activity within the cosmos.”

We can conclude that we have a responsibility to be creative.

### **What about the state of the arts in this world now?**

We know that the Devil only perverts what God created.

*Exodus 20:4-5 “You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments”.*

*Exo 32:4 And he took them from their hand, and fashioned it with an engraving tool. And he made it a molten calf. And they said, These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.*

This is a perversion of the pattern that God set up for His own worship.

A perversion of the arts is to pull people away from the presence of God. Our creative ability has power for good or for evil. The enemy has no creative ability. Although Satan is a cunning adversary to the Kingdom of God, he has absolutely no ability to create. A master of destruction, he can only witness the creative gift in action from afar through the creative nature of God and His artists.

Some Christians believe that art must have some sort of a message of salvation or at least depict something from the Bible to be valid. This thought does not fully follow the patterns that God set up. *God produced both a functional and aesthetic creation, as well as commanding symbolic creations.*

*Genesis 2:9 And out of the ground Jehovah God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food.*

Excerpt below from Church@community by Ed Delph.

“Our primary purpose as Christians and churches is to be conformed to the image of Jesus (it is predestined), and *secondly* to fulfill calling. If your calling comes before being conformed to Jesus, you are in danger of becoming sectarian, judgmental, and one-dimensional. *Emphases are wonderful servants, but terrible masters.* Your calling is never the standard, Jesus is!”

When we mix up our purposes and motives we fall out of line with God. Our calling is not the main thing. Being an artist is not the main thing. Doing art is not the main thing. God is!

The arts are God's good gifts to us. They are not to be feared and avoided because they have become perverted and stained.

### **What is our part in the redemption of the arts?**

God desires that we be transformed into the image of His Son.

*Rom 8:29 God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the*

*original and intended shape of our lives there in him. MSG*

*Eph 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.*

How do we accomplish that?

*John 14:20 At that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.*

*John 15:4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it remains in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.*

*Col 1:27 For to them God would make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory,*

We are to be involved with God in the reclamation process, so that the arts will again reflect His original creational purposes for them, restoring their glory and beauty.

Below is excerpted from *Taking it to the Streets: Using the Arts to Transform Your Community* by Corbitt and Nix-Early

### **How does the artist play a role?**

This is the exciting part! This is where artists who care deeply about community and desire their world to change in significant ways can find vision and purpose for their calling as an artist.

In the context of *arts in redemptive transformation*, there are three general categories of function for the artist. See if you can find yourself in these descriptions. Some artists' fit only in one – others will fit in two – and some will find themselves in all three.

***Urban Prophetic Artist*** – Their role in the transformation process is to create *critical awareness* of the need for change. Urban prophets and the prophetic arts confront injustice both within the church and in society at large. The Old Testament prophet, Amos, is a good example of the urban prophetic artist. (Amos was not confronting pagans – he was confronting God's people – pleading, preaching, and praying for their transformation.)

Urban Prophetic Artists are able to:

- Discern and analyze critically what is happening in society in relation to the past
- Identify with the plight of society's victims
- Unmask hypocrisy
- Evoke hope that results in action
- Exhibit a strong calling, as in the case of Jonah, who could not escape his role as God's voice, despite running in the opposite direction of his target audience
- "Preach" a specific message out of a vision for justice and personal redemption
- Often use the language of the streets but live a life of compassion
- A propensity for action
- An ability to draw empathy from one's own personal pain and heartbreak
- A goal of redemption through making the word known, and through example of new character and in good deeds – a holistic presentation of the Gospel of the Kingdom (incarnational relationships)
- "Out of Pocket" sacrifice of personal resources of time and money
- Risky love
- Compassion for the unloved, the forgotten, the rejected, the excluded
- A spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness that crosses ethnic and other boundaries
- Commitment – faithfully showing up
- Knowing your limits and seeking rejuvenation

**Agape Artist** – use their artistic gifts in the *working out* stage of transformation. Their abilities are used to create and carry out solutions (gifts for mission and ministry) outside the four walls of the sanctuary, in the community. Their purpose is to love one's neighbor through and with the arts. They are holistic and communal – while they understand the spiritual nature of the arts and strive for excellence in artistic presentation, they place greater or equal emphasis on caring for the needs of others, including improving their quality of life and their sense of worth as God's creation. The focus of agape artists is on the broad concept of realizing *shalom* and the Kingdom of God in the present – a gospel that includes salvation but also seeks after Kingdom development in all areas of individual and community life.

*Hosea* is a great example of the agape artist in the Old Testament. He spoke to God's people and to the political and religious leaders of the land through both word and action. His very life story acted out the very message he was bringing from God – like a play within a play. An agape artists ministry through love often comes from their having experienced tragedy, pain, and injustice similar to those that they work with or similar to the issues the artists is struggling to address.

The ministry of an agape artist should be characterized by:

- A call and commandment from God

**Celebrative Artists** – provide an opportunity to celebrate renewal for people, churches, community, and society. Celebration comes at the point of goal completion where working out a specific problem or goal gives pause for rest, reflection, and for praise for the accomplishment. These artists strive for excellence and also take artistic traditions of the culture into consideration. The arts used include music, visual arts, dance and drama. Such art within the walls of the church are referred to as *sanctuary arts*. Outside of the church walls celebrations occur all of the time for traditional reasons – national holidays, weddings, funerals, birthdays, civic and community achievements, etc. Such celebrations are important for remembrance, recognition of a major goal achieved, and *for pointing people forward to the future*. The Bible is filled with examples of celebrative art from Genesis to Revelation...from worship in the Temple to feasts and holy days, and so forth.

**Once a change has taken place, the redemptive transformation process should repeat.** The goal is a healthy spiraling upward. This is why it is important the celebrative arts always point people to the future.

### **Artistic Gifts:**

Regardless of where you find yourself – urban prophetic, agape, or celebrative artist – there are other certain spiritual gifts and talents that will allow you to be successful in A.R.T. ministry. The list in I Corinthians 12: 28-31 when applied to the artist looks like this:

*Administration – Art Architects:* excellent administrative skills – know how to organize a structure for the delivery of arts and arts programs...visionary, understands structures – how to build them and how to work within them, networks within the broader community of artists, businesses, and churches

*Performance (Proclamation) –*

*Performing/Preaching Artists:* use their art form excellently as a communicative tool.

*Service – Servant Artists:* most concerned with serving others through their art

*Ministry - Arts Ministers/Liturgists:* excellent choreographers, composers, dramatists, and others who know how to plan and design an artistic or worship experience in which a message is communicated clearly and out of which community is created.

*Teaching – Educator Artists:* understand the teaching power of the arts and are adept at integrating arts in relevant ways to teach a subject to a particular audience

*Healing – Empathetic Artists:* not confined to a professional therapy model, understand the healing power of arts and are able to utilize and heal spiritual and emotional hurt through creative expression.

*End of excerpt.*

This list is not exhaustive....

### To recap:

- God is a creator.
- Art at its best is a shared experience.
- God wants creation to reflect his glory.
- Man is created in God's image.
- We have a responsibility to create
- Art creates and environment
- Arts represent that which is not yet apparent in the natural realm.
- The Devil only perverts, he has no creative power.
- Our creative ability has power for good or for evil.
- God produced both a functional and aesthetic creation.
- The arts are God's good gift to us.
- God desires that we be transformed into the image of his son.
- We are to be involved with God in the reclamation process.
- General categories of function for the artist:
  - ◆ Urban Prophetic Artist
  - ◆ Agape Artist
  - ◆ Celebrative Artist
- Artistic Gifts:
  - ◆ Administration – Art Architects
  - ◆ Performance (Proclamation) – Performing/Preaching Artists
  - ◆ Service – Servant Artists
  - ◆ Ministry - Arts Ministers/Liturgists
  - ◆ Teaching – Educator Artists
  - ◆ Healing – Empathetic Artists

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