

youth ministry

# accent

the resource for adventist youth leaders



## **COVER STORY:**

### **Creative Leadership**

*for the Non-creative Leader*

## **FEATURE STORY:**

### **30 Years Later**

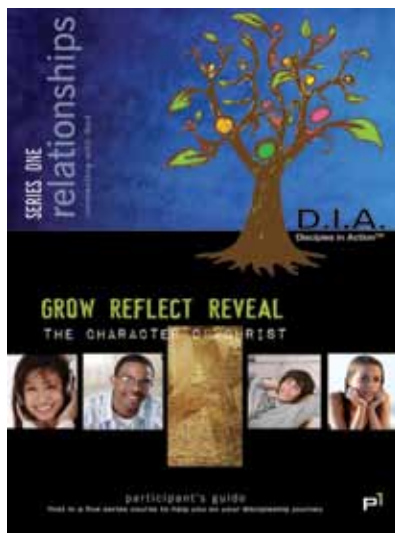
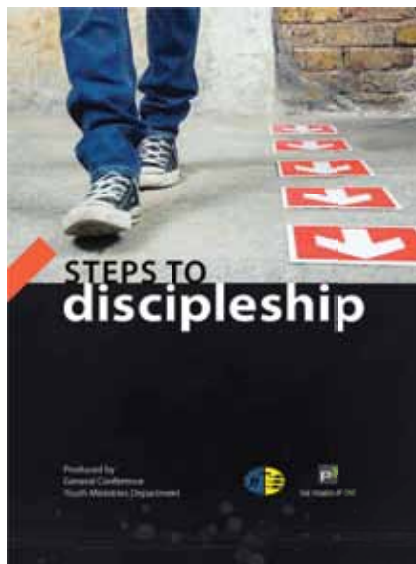
*...and Jesus Wept*

**Skits • Dramas • Workshops**

# HELP YOUR YOUTH GROUP GROW CLOSER TO GOD

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# imagine...

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 deadily 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.



**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.

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.

## heARTspace of LOVE...

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! ●



the resource for adventist youth leaders

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# ARTS ...an expression of social justice

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. They can become connectors between members to strengthen and help grow the church.

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, end 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](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/12/07/top-kids-making-difference_n_1133564.html#slide=523310) | ●



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# 30 Years Later

...and Jesus wept.

*By Nathan Brown*

istockphoto.com



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.SpectrumMagazine.org](http://www.SpectrumMagazine.org). Nathan is one of the conveners of the Manifest Creative Arts Festival ([www.artsmanifest.info](http://www.artsmanifest.info)) and has worked on a number of projects with the Adventist Development and Relief Agency in Australia. He also is a continuing university student, plays basketball in an "old man's league," assists his wife with gardening, and takes his big dog for regular walks.

**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.**

**A**s 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?

**Estimates vary between 300 to 1000 residents of Bethlehem at the time of Jesus' birth; of these there might have been between seven and twenty baby boys in the age group targeted by Herod.**

## **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-lost in the sorrow of the morning the soldiers came and killed a generation of their children. This was still painfully clear. "Messiahs" came and went—and the people's hopes with them, particularly in Bethlehem, which seemed to have a special place in some of the old prophecies—but their children were brutally taken away.

The order from Herod had been to kill all the boys under two years old, but with ruthless efficiency and the taste for blood, the soldiers were not checking carefully. In their small village, at least twenty children were dragged from their mothers' arms, taken from their humble homes, and callously murdered that morning.

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.

## **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 to be circumcised and named.

In the early morning, she had heard noise coming from the street but, numbed 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 three 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.



**It bothered me that the last we hear of Bethlehem in the whole Bible story is Matthew 2:18, so one way of wrestling with this was by imagining this story—what might have been.**

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 lost years and also the lost hope. What if one of the boys from their village had been the Messiah as 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

**This story was written in the aftermath of the Sandy Hook school shooting in December 2012. The questions about “Why?” and “Where was God?” were fresh and not always answered helpfully by Christian voices.**

in His heart and mind like a carpenter’s splinter.

It was a bitter irony that the tragedy that had visited Bethlehem was not because of the people’s godlessness, as some would allege, or because of God’s indifferent absence, as so many more would argue by their desperate question, “Where was God?” Instead, this horrific crime came about precisely because of His presence. This troubled Him deeply.

In His first major public sermon, He referenced this story at the climax of His list of those who are “blessed” in the kingdom of heaven: “Blessed are those who suffer because of Me.” Even before He was conscious of His identity—either His humanity or His divinity—there were those who suffered because of Him. It broke His heart and, more so, as He imagined the countless more who would suffer in so many different ways “because of Him” or “for His sake.” Somehow they must be “blessed.”

So His journeying took Him to Bethlehem. He could hardly stay away. It was becoming more difficult for Him around Jerusalem and He expected He would soon focus His ministry around Galilee, away from the dangerous crowds and politics of the city. But first He wanted to visit the village of His birth that had featured in so many of Mary’s special stories, as well as being so significant in the history of the Hebrew people. Not knowing quite what He would find there, He suspected He would not be able to ignore the darker, more troubling story of His family’s escape on the eve of the darkest day in Bethlehem’s history.

## **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.

**The conclusion to this story is based not just on imagination but also on what I believe about what Jesus is like. He cares, He weeps with us, He comforts us. I don't think He could have ignored this part of His story on earth and the impact it had on this village.**

"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."

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

It was as if He saw her thirty-year-old pain. She held her breath as He stepped toward her and the crowd opened before Him. A murmur went through the crowd, unsure why Jesus had picked out Rachel, not knowing or remembering the significance of this date.

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 has 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 she 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. ●



by Moe Ioane Stiles

## *Creativity and faithfulness* **IN OUR HANDS**

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 musicians, storytellers, scriptwriters and actors, and the various types of visual artists. It is daunting to even think about creativity outside of these “art forms.”

I was confronted by the dilemma that many of 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 and 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 we do this is not confined to one model or methodology. We are each created uniquely and with this comes the challenge of portraying this same message in ways that different people can understand and receive. We must imagine every angle, method and medium by which the person of Jesus is shared 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.” We are creating every day. 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 realisation 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).

“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



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 stutter. 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 the bigger task ahead, allowing him to live so he could bring the children of Israel out of Egypt.

### 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 kidnapping 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 right there 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.

Too often we think bigger and more is best. My dad always says, “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.

However, while there may well be moments of miracle, creativity also requires faithfulness. It is easy to say, “Use what God has placed in your hands,” but it is harder to face the fact that it is going to be hard work. This is where our faithfulness needs to be put into practice.

As we read the story of Moses, he faced many challenges, particularly from the people he led and their seemingly endless complaints. These were the very people who needed freedom, which he had brought to them with the help of God, but it never seemed enough. Yet Moses persevered faithfully using that one trusty and familiar tool as God continued to lead.

Easier said than done. We cannot afford to become discouraged and let go of what we have that can be used to bring healing, hope, joy, beauty, and freedom. There is a place for what we have to offer, and we must continue to bring together what we have imagined for our church community. Imagine what we can do with all of our creativity—and what we can share with the world!

### 4 CREATIVELY SIMPLE

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.

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 to 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.

## 5 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”—as 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). ●



*Moe Ioane Stiles is director of youth ministries for the Victorian Conference, based in Melbourne, Australia.*

**ROUNABOUT FAITH**  
28 Fundamental Beliefs for Young Adults  
TROY FITZGERALD

**ROUNABOUT FAITH**  
is a journey through 28 fundamental beliefs for young adults. Each chapter is framed in a format that celebrates the young adult search for meaning while challenging them to connect what they believe to how they live. In the same way that a roundabout flows in one direction around a center point, each lesson urges participants to yield their mind to Christ and merge their life with the Word of God. This study can be used for personal study as well as with small groups.



# CREATIVE LEADERSHIP

**FOR THE NON-CREATIVE LEADER**

By Glenn Townsend

PLUS:

**“AND I DON’T EVEN LIKE THE WORD”**

by Joanna Darby

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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—like me—you may have very hidden talent?

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# 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 as various patterns and shapes 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—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 11<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> 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 minerals, 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,



Titus 1:12). He encouraged the early churches to sing and he quoted psalms and the lyrics of an early Christian song that he may have authored (see Philippians 2:5–11, Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16).

There is no doubt that creativity and the arts flourish when such a leader has artistic skills and models creativity. But while many of the Bible's leaders wrote, few others shared such creative talent and passion. So what of leaders like me who cannot hold a tune or explain depth and symbolism in a song or a painting?

## JESUS AND JOHN

In his re-telling of the story of Jesus, Luke offers us some insights into how to lead in a way that encourages creativity in every way, including the arts, from the comparisons he draws between the respective ministries of Jesus and John the Baptist.

In Luke 7, the imprisoned John the Baptist sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come or should we expect someone else?" (Luke 7:19, 20, NIV). In other words, "Are you really the Messiah?—because from what I am hearing and where I am at, I am not sure." The way Jesus did ministry was different from the way John had gone about his ministry.

The story line in the first part of the book of Luke's gospel, leading up to this question, switches from John to Jesus three times (see Luke 1–4), suggesting that a comparison between the two is intended. There are many similarities between their lives, ministry, and message, but there are also quite a few differences.

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 come 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 is 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 captor 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 captor. 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 one 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 do not want to sing or participate. When the flute played bright music, no-one danced. When a funeral song was sung, no-one cried. Some children—some people—are just 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. You would dance if you had been paralyzed and could now walk; you 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 president has a magic wand and can 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 this ministry. This church has baptized ten people this year and their tithe 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 25 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, a drunkard, and friends with the outcasts of society. What mattered to Him was that some of those people's lives were changed because they met Him. He simply continued His ministry. If you are called to ministry and have the balance of message and audience, just keep doing it—and let God make the ministry effective (see also 1 Corinthians 9:19–23).

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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.

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 41:7, 44:9–20). 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 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 each local church having a choir, a band, brass or string ensembles, quartets and trios—young and old with voice, guitar, cello, drums, and trumpet—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 . . .

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 one 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. ●



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*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.*

# And I Don't Even Like the

*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 misshapen 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 into the nothingness and created order, colour, and all the extravagant design of all living things. He even set up a memorial for us to celebrate once a week so we wouldn't forget. He always uses the most creative means to communicate with His people and demonstrate His power and love.

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 spirit of 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 dark, and life where there was death. Daily,

# Word. by Joanna Darby

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 events 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



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# Tip-toeing down the stairs in an

effort not to wake the rest of the house, I furtively 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 . . .



## THUNDERBIRDS, LEGOS, AND WORKING WITH GOD

*Because He creates, I too must create!*

By Tony Knight

### CREATIVITY AND MINISTRY

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 reverie—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—stairways, landings, every square inch was covered with my own carefully constructed miniatures. The panels rotated, the chute shot, the turntables turned, even the palm trees leaned 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 Legos! 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 minds-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 “light-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 the 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” how 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!” That can be a nice 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; Philippians 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 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 described 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 us in 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 us 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 have sinned and fall short of God’s glory (see Romans 3:23), so to all is offered the opportunity to be a part of a 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 impulses 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 (see 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 5:56) in every part of our lives, including the creative impulse so unique to God and consequently 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 seen fit to involve us in His work of redemption. 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 1:1–5 reveal a clear ministry principle—that light drives out darkness, light is good, and that the true creative process thrives in 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 my feet" (Psalm 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 what 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 set about 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 of Him, to walk and talk and live 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, arrange, order, 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 evaluative process is key. 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 where 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 a thousand different ways. Same bits, 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



certainly only one race of people—ours, of course—to populate the earth. Yet before sin entered the world, God created multitudes of species of life on this planet. Why? Was it all just about functionality? Or was it about beauty and lavishness and texture and taste and smell and a crazy variety and whimsy that made His heart soar and His lips curl up in a smile, so much so that as He looked out at His amazingly diverse creation He could not help but blurt out “Wow—that really IS very good!” In the same way, He gifted His servants with a diverse range of talents and creative abilities and let them loose on this planet. Same mission, different gifts. Some would argue that all should speak in tongues, or that all should be evangelists or teachers. But the principle of Scripture is diversity—in creation, in giftedness, in ministry, in creativity.

### **The Tools 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 with the right tools and materials, I can create almost anything. Whether it's an item of furniture, taking a beautiful picture, writing a drama script, planning a worship service, drafting a sermon, or building up a young person to be a leader in the church, the principles and the motivation are the same:

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.

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 and precious gifts to me, joining with Him in sharing the good news. ●



*Tony Knight is  
director of youth  
ministries for the*

*Australian Union Conference, based in  
Melbourne, Australia.*



## ONE YEAR TO CHANGE THE WORLD

[www.gcyouthministries.org](http://www.gcyouthministries.org)

**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 wisely 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!**



A few months ago, I took the opportunity to visit the travelling exhibition of the finalists of the Archibald Prize, one of Australia's best-known and most prestigious art prizes awarded each year for the best portrait painting. The criteria for the competition encourages artists to paint portraits of Australians who have publicly contributed to the arts, letters, science or politics, and part of the popularity of this annual competition and exhibition is that many of the subjects of the paintings are well known, meaning the artist's portrayal of their subject is open to assessment and judgment by even the most amateur art critic.

As such an amateur, viewing the forty-one paintings selected as finalists, I was surprised at the number of self-portraits in the exhibition. In one of the gallery's rooms, I paused and counted that nine of the nineteen paintings—including the prize

winner and runner-up—were self-portraits. I was disappointed, not only because I was deprived of the "celebrity spotting" offered by the other paintings, but also because, as a survey of this kind of art and creativity, it seemed too self-centred and self-serving. I later discovered that I was not the only "critic" who had noticed and questioned this trend.

Of course, there are pragmatic reasons for this. The entry conditions for the Archibald Prize require that the portrait be "painted from life"—that the artist gets to know their subject personally and has them participate in at least one live sitting. Arranging time and place for such sittings can be difficult and potentially expensive when considering the busyness of most prominent people and travel costs. So it is understandable why many artists choose to paint themselves or each other.

While convenience is not always the best criteria for worthwhile art, there is a measure of truth reflected in such an act of creative self-representation. There is a sense in which all art is about the artist. As William Zinsser comments about writing—but his statement could be equally applied to all acts of creativity—“Writing is an act of ego, and you might as well admit it” (*On Writing Well*, page 23). Zinsser later makes the distinction between ego and egotism—the first, necessary for creativity, the second, a drag on it—and, despite its well-established place in the traditions of art, where individual examples of self-portraiture fit within this distinction often seems open to question.

put it like this: “No work of art is more important than the Christian’s own life, and every Christian is called upon to be an artist in this sense. He may have no gift of writing. No gift of composing or singing, but each man has the gift of creativity in terms of how he lives his life. In this sense, the Christian’s life is to be a thing of truth and also a thing of beauty in the midst of a lost and despairing world” (page 94).

### 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

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,

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## “The art of our lives is primarily God’s work, made possible by our collaboration with Him.”

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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 creative Christian.

In *Art and the Bible*, creative Christian thinker Francis Schaeffer

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.

care for others, care for land and animals, even what we eat. As suggested by the second “great” commandment—love for others as ourselves—loving is not so much a fuzzy feeling but an active living. So loving God is not about our feeling so much as our faithfulness, loving and living with passion, engagement, energy, purpose and creativity, living “with all our heart,

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 dour 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 resistance and hope in the face of seeming hopelessness. We reject the voices that tell us that what we see and feel are all there 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 life 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 as a thing of truth and beauty—our great call to creativity—needs a community of collaboration and support. In the context of the hope we have, the writer of Hebrews urges, “Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works” (Hebrews 10:24, NLT). We are not expected to do this on our



own. We should be able to draw on the resources of a creative and faithful community.

We must also be prepared to contribute to such a community, encouraging others in their creative living and contributing to a community environment in which creative and counter-cultural lives and projects are supported and welcomed. When others fear and attack acts of creativity or when truth is devalued or beauty dismissed as worthless or unnecessary, we will use our voices and influence to create safety and support for those whose work has been criticised and to encourage them to still greater “acts of love and good works.”

## COLLABORATION WITH OUR CREATOR

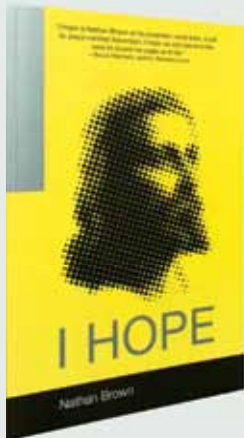
But even this creative role, together with all the other creative calls on our lives, is built on a deeper and greater collaboration with the Creator Himself. The call to live our lives as our greatest work of art is daunting—until we recognise that even this work is one of collaboration with the Great 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).

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—spring 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 less acts of ego than acts of worship. ●



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From the  
author of the  
2013 Young  
Adults Week of  
Prayer

# I HOPE

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**is a collection of editorials, essays and stories to  
encourage your faith • challenge your life  
grow your church • change your world**

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*“One cannot read this book without being profoundly challenged, impacted and blessed. In I Hope, Nathan has articulated so powerfully what many of us in this generation are grappling with—how to authentically live out the kingdom of God in the here and now, yet still looking forward to the coming of Jesus. It’s challenging—but he does offer suggestions for how we can go about this with hope.”*

—Moe Ioane Stiles, Director of Youth Ministries,  
Victorian Conference, Australia

*“In a world increasingly infected by bombast and oversimplified generalizations, Nathan Brown uses words as a surgeon uses a laser to perform a delicate operation. I Hope is a book that examines current issues as they should be examined: carefully, deliberately and precisely.”*

— Steven Chavez, Managing Editor, Adventist Review/Adventist World

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# IDEAPAC

## TOOLBOX

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- *Love : Loss*
- *Life : Loss*
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#### **KIMBERLEY TAGERT-PAUL**

is an internationally published author whose passion is writing for young people. She has been married to the love of her life for more than thirty years. Her life goal is to make it to heaven and take as many people with her as she can.



#### **SCOTT WEGENER**

is an award-winning writer (for originality and creativity), game creator and drama director at his church in suburban Melbourne, Australia.

Scott is the imagination behind [sabbathideas.org](http://sabbathideas.org) and, loving the creativity of Disneyland, has published a book called *Things to Do in Theme Park Queues*.



#### **DEBBONNAIRE KOVACS**

has been writing since she was a small child and sold her first story at the age of eleven. Today she is a full-time author and speaker, with fifteen books and more than 200 stories and articles published. She also has taught writing classes for adults and children. She can be contacted at [debbonnaire@debbonnaire.com](mailto:debbonnaire@debbonnaire.com)



#### **NATHAN DALTON**

is a filmmaker from Australia. His work can be viewed on Vimeo, the home for high quality videos and the people who love them.

[VIMEO.COM/NATHANDALTON](http://VIMEO.COM/NATHANDALTON)





## ► A Picture is Worth. . .

**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 been looking at a work of art. They stop and pretend to stand before another piece of art, studying it. They must stand turned slightly toward the audience so that they can be heard.)*

**Karen:** As you can see, we have a fine example of modern art here. Look at the details. What do you see?

**Kareem:** It's a baby.

**Karen:** Ah. But is it just a baby?

**Kareem:** *(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:** Jordon, what do you see?

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

**Chelsea:** 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 say's, *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.

**Chelsea:** 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.

*Gift of God.* Wow, I never thought of Jesus as being like every other baby.



Mary had to change his diaper, and burp him, and do all the other things that a baby needs.

**Marcia:** But still he came. And laid in a bed of straw. God. Wow.

**Kareem:** I never knew a picture could make me think this deep. I thought they were all just pretty things to look at. I've never thought that much about what was behind the meaning. It puts Jesus' coming 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**

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## 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?



## SHORT FILMS BY NATHAN DALTON

SUITABLE FOR  
ALL AUDIENCES

### LOVE: LOSS

(2012 Manifest Creative Arts Winner: Best Original Film)

The first in a three part series on loss.

A short story about a man attempting to move on from a failed marriage.

[VIMEO.COM/NATHANDALTON/LOVELOSS](http://VIMEO.COM/NATHANDALTON/LOVELOSS)

Written by Nathan Dalton and Jesse O'Brien

Shot by Christian D'Alessi

Music by Kylie Stacey

### LIFE: LOSS

The second in a three part series on loss

Inspired by a poem about a miscarriage.

[VIMEO.COM/NATHANDALTON/LIFELOSS](http://VIMEO.COM/NATHANDALTON/LIFELOSS)

Written By Nathan Dalton

Voice by Sienna Glasbergen and Kylie Stacey

Music by Bart Raethel

### FAITH: LOSS

The third in a three part series on loss.

As an older man faces his mortality, he questions what he believes.

[VIMEO.COM/NATHANDALTON/FAITHLOSS](http://VIMEO.COM/NATHANDALTON/FAITHLOSS)

By Nathan Dalton with Marty O'Neill

Music by Jetson Roller







## ▶ 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.

**Seth:** Praise Him for his acts of power; praise Him for His surpassing greatness.

**Mr. Barley:** Beth, can you read the next three verses, please?

**Beth:** *(She nods at Mr. Barkley.)* Praise Him with the sounding of the trumpet, Praise Him with the harp and lyre, Praise Him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise Him with the harp and lyre, praise Him with timbrel and dancing, praise Him with the strings and pipe, praise Him with the clash of cymbals, praise Him with resounding cymbals.

*(Mr. Barkley nods at Nathan to read the last verse.)*

**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.)*

**THE END**

## 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?

## **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 earthlings – Chris and Althea – on either side.)*



**Alex:** *(wait two seconds and nod as if listening - pretending there is a delay in the live cross)* 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 from this sinful planet. *(excitedly)* HE'S COMING BACK BABY!!!

**Alex:** Well, there's sheer joy for you, but over here I have Althea, who still believes this is all made up. Althea, you're not concerned that your disbelief in Jesus as the son of God will prevent you from an eternity of joy with Him?

**Althea:** I'm not worried at all. This is just another stunt by the Christians. But even if Chris was right and will be going to heaven, I think I'll be going too. He's done some nasty stuff in his day. I'm more than happy to stand in some 'heavenly courtroom' with Chris, if such a place actually exists. He'll make me look like an angel. *(laughs)*

**Alex:** Well there you have it, split opinions but both still optimistic. Back to you in the studio.

**Desk 2:** Thanks, Alex. Now we cross to an expert in the Bible's probationology. Theo, what does this mean for those two friends on earth—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. 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 the entirety of the universe put together. Jesus, thanks for taking a moment to speak to us, I know you're a very busy man slash God.

**Jesus:** No worries, Gabe. *(Waves and gives the thumbs up at people in the crowd, clearly excited and distracted a little, but listening)*

**Gabe:** So we have word probation is now closed. What's happening next?

**Jesus:** Well, I've just got the last few billion angels to position, then we're off to Earth to pick up my kids.

**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. *(sarcastically)*

**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:** After the break, an alarming report on the dangers of texting while teleporting. Back soon. *(start short news music play out)*

**THE END**





## JESUS JUICE

**FOCUS:** Witnessing, sharing Jesus with those around us

*[Person walks in ("Juice") with a bottle full of juice. Another ("Empty 1") walks towards them with an empty bottle. Juice quickly hides his full bottle as not to draw attention that he has juice and they don't.]*

**Empty 1:** Hi

**Juice:** Hi

**Empty 1:** Doing anything on the weekend?

**Juice:** *[hesitant to share they go to church]* Umm, not really.

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

**Juice:** *[hesitant to share they go to church on Sabbath]* Oh, err, mmmm.

**Empty 1:** I'll chat later.

**Juice:** *[relieved]* Right, see ya.

*[Empty 1 leaves, Empty 2 enters with empty bottle; Juice hides bottle again]*

**Empty 2:** Hey, I haven't seen you in ages. What are you up to these days? Still the party animal I remember?

**Juice:** Nah. How bout you?

**Empty 2:** I'm struggling actually. One day at a time. There's gotta be more to life than this.

**Juice:** Yeah, ummm, well.

**Empty 2:** Good to see you.

**Juice:** *[relieved]* Right, see ya.

*[Empty 2 leaves, Empty 3 enters; Juice hides bottle again]*

**Empty 3:** Hi

**Juice:** Hi. How's it going?

**Empty 3:** Not great. My dad died the other week.

**Juice:** 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, ummm, I'm not sure that ...

**Empty 3:** Well, gotta run.

**Juice:** *[relieved]* Righto, see you later.

*[Empty 3 leaves - TRUMPET SOUNDS. Juice proudly pulls out his full bottle of juice and lines up behind a few others who beat him to the front of the line with just a tiny bit of juice in their bottle. Empty 1, 2, 3 come out to see what's happening and join the end of the line behind Juice. Angel meets first in the line]*

**Angel:** Greetings! Do you have Jesus in your life?

**Tiny Juice 1:** I do, only I have shared much of Him with my friends.

**Angel:** Well done good and faithful servant, you may all enter.

*[Juice approaches]*

**Angel:** Greetings! Do you have Jesus in your life?

**Juice:** I do—check this out!

**Empty 1, 2, 3:** *[all gasp]* Where did you get all that from?

**Juice:** *[proudly]* Bible study and prayer.

**Angel:** You may enter.

*[Juice steps to other side of Angel but waits, looking back]*

**Angel:** Greetings! Do you have Jesus in your life?

**Empty 1:** Umm, no.

**Empty 2:** But we're with him.

**Empty 3:** He has lots of Jesus.

**Angel:** I'm sorry, the opportunity for sharing Jesus has now finally passed.

**Empty 1:** But. We didn't know about this:

**Empty 2:** *[to Juice]* How come you never told us we needed Jesus?

**Empty 3:** Yeah, why didn't you say something. . .

**Angel:** I am sorry. We delayed as long as we could. The time has indeed now passed.

*[Angel walks off, Juice lingers, shrugs shoulders slowly as there's nothing he can do now and mouths 'sorry', then walks off. Empties walk out other door, bemused.]*

**Empty 3:** Now what's going to happen to us?

**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]*

*[Jesus looks miffed briefly and then starts miming to the remaining disciple]*

**Disciple 1:** Jesus is the vine. He is ... thin and has brown flaky skin.

Jesus ... grows grapes that we can ... make wine to sell to our neighbours.

He...is the vine of... knowledge of... good and evil??

*[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:** The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed...

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

*[Jesus looks miffed briefly and then starts miming to the remaining disciple]*

**Disciple 1:** The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, it's ... very small. Heaven is ... kind of spicy. ... But probably not too spicy for those who don't like spicy food.

*[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 thinks for a moment and smiles, and makes them put their arms around each other and gestures to hold onto each other.]*

**Jesus:** All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

*[Disciple 1 tries to leave, Disciple 2 holds him down to wait until the end]*

**Jesus:** Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

*[Disciple 1 pulls up Disciple 2, who wanted to stay. They leave down the aisle and exit the back of the room, while calling out as they exit]*

*[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.)*

*[Five or so seconds after the disciples have left the room and are quiet, He leaves side of stage, nodding.]*

**THE END**



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A WORKSHOP BY SCOTT WEGENER

# PRACTICING CREATIVITY *and* CREATIVITY AND PROBLEM SOLVING

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HOW MANY CREATIVES DOES IT TAKE TO CHANGE A LIGHT BULB?

EVERYONE IS CREATIVE. GOD MADE US THAT WAY.

THIS WORKSHOP LOOKS AT METHODICAL STEPS TO TAP INTO EVERYONE'S CREATIVITY.

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## 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:** Define the specific problem elements of the four earlier examples and also the specific outcomes you hope to achieve for each.*

### 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.

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

#### 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.

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.

#### Example:

Make an ad to convince church members to attend a business meeting.

1. **List** the attributes we have to work with. There’s the ad format and the tone of the language, the church members that need incentive to come, the meeting’s advertised agenda, and its time and location.



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, score, spin, roll, click, throw, drop, catch, balance, pull apart.
  - Box of Mints:
  - 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 all 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 can be used elsewhere?
  - 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, infomercial.*

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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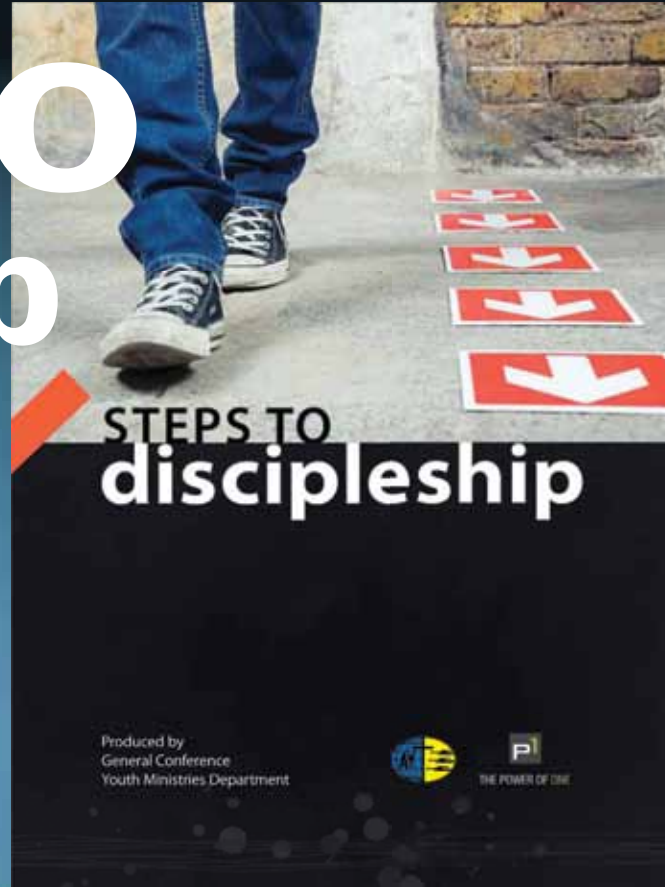
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# CREATIVE ARTS *as* MINISTRY

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## 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 board. Now ask which of these arts the members of the group have some ability in. List the names beside the representative arts on the board.

**Discuss, but only briefly at this point—1-2 minutes:**  
Have you thought of these as ministries? Which arts may not be mentioned that we think of as ministries?

### 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 artistic ability and creations and how we use them is in Exodus.

We know that God rescued the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt, but we often forget to think about what they had been doing all those centuries. We don’t know how their slavery began—possibly in

small, seemingly insignificant ways—but we do know *when* it began. It was, according to Exodus 1:8, after a new king arose “who didn’t know Joseph.” Eventually, the multitudes of Israelites were used as slaves for a very common goal in those times: they were building palaces, monuments, possibly temples and pyramids, to honor various people of power—mostly Pharaohs.

These edifices displayed the height that architectural and artistic 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, a place in which to conduct services, 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, rickrack and other trims, flowers, grass, seeds, stones, "gems," water, paper cups and plates, paper clips. . . use all the imagination you can. If you use this second method, allow an extra five minutes for the search.*
- Time: 10 minutes
- Read Exodus 35:25-35.

- Have a scribe write down kinds of arts that were not mentioned in the first passage. But instead of simply *talking* about the subject of arts and ministry, have the group create something—anything they want to—to represent the tabernacle or the presence of God in some way.
- For this exercise you can work individually, in small groups, or as one large group.

**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?
- Is there a variation in responses of different individuals?

**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 cloth 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 offerings 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 sin (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 1:11; Hebrews 10:1-4 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 one 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, fasting, and listening to readings of the law. In Judges 21:19-21, when the Benjamites were told how to get wives for themselves, a yearly "feast of the Lord" is mentioned—possibly the Feast of Tabernacles, one of the liveliest of the feasts. The young women are described as dancing as

part of these celebrations in a very matter-of-fact way, as if dancing were a normal part of the festivals. Certainly dancing has been a part of Jewish festivals in the centuries between then and now.

#### • Levites

The second office God gave, that of Levites, was something like our deacons today—Levites were responsible for the care of the building itself. In the wilderness, they took it down and set it up, and sometimes were also responsible for lighting of lamps and so forth. When the nation settled and David made plans for the permanent temple that Solomon would build, he pointed out that Levites no longer had to carry the building (1 Chronicles 23:25, 26), so he divided their labors into such divisions as gatekeepers and care of the treasures, as well as care of the temple. They were also to bake the showbread and "stand every morning to thank and to praise the Lord, and likewise at evening" (23:30).

1 Chron. 22 through 26 detail the offices David considered necessary for this new temple his son would build. Besides priests and Levites, there appears to have been only one other office: musicians. Again, whole clan lineages were set aside and dedicated to the work of praising God in music, which was called "prophesying" (see 25:1, 3). These were people who were not only skilled but "trained in singing to the Lord," as shown in verse 7.

## • 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, who had been taking care of it for some years, to “the city of David,” there were lyres, harps, tambourines, castanets, 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 Michal “despised him in her heart.” But later in the chapter, it is clear God was not displeased with David, but with Michal, 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 reinstatement of the offices of priest, Levite, and musician “as prescribed by David the man of God, division corresponding to division” (Nehemiah 12:24). This appears, from the rest of the story, to have meant what we would call antiphonal choirs, at least at the special ceremony of dedication. The story describes the choirs marching toward each other on opposite walls, singing back and forth in response to each other. They, too, had harps, lyres, and cymbals, and sang and rejoiced so loudly that they could be “heard from afar” (verse 43). 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 as ways of reaching 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 [recipes.com](http://recipes.com). You can bake it using gas or electricity though!)

## • 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 anger. 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 exemplify God’s power and creativeness. 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 so on were actually sentient and knew anything about their Creator. A good example is Psalm 148, which calls on sun, moon, stars, heavens, waters, “sea monsters,” deeps, fire, hail, snow, clouds, stormy wind, mountains and hills, fruit trees, cedars, beasts, cattle, creeping things, and winged fowl to praise God and His holy name

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 that 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 furniture. We can be sure, just because of what we know of Him, that He did His very best and made

sure everything that left His hands was a thing of beauty and usefulness.

When He began His Messianic ministry, Jesus used parables and drama more than any other teaching method. Even when He was directly preaching, such as in the Sermon on the Mount, He used lots and lots of stories and illustrations. He even used fiction, including what we would label as fantasy. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus, found in Luke 16:18-20, would not explain direct truth even to those who believe in immortal souls. No one believes the righteous living “in the bosom of Abraham” and the wicked burning in hell can see and speak to each other, and Jesus knew that. His hearers knew He was trying to make a more important point—in fact, the point that they'd better listen to Him and His stories now, while they could!

When He explained the parable of the sower (Matt. 13, Mk. 4, Lk. 8), Jesus also explained to His disciples that stories could reach “deaf ears” and “blind eyes” of people who might resist or reject what He had to say if He spoke more directly to them, as He could to His own disciples. This is one reason why Christian fiction often opens doors in lives and hearts that pastors at their most earnest and prayerful cannot reach.

John's story of the Revelation of Jesus as King of Kings and Lord of Lords draws perhaps most heavily of all on visual and auditory imagery,

symbolism and drama. In this case, it was meant first to get past the censors (“What difference does it make what this crazy guy writes to his churches?!”) then to last the centuries and teach lessons to various eras and ages of church history and, finally, to help delineate and make clear the final prophecies of this planet. These stories, like all of living Scripture, have meant so many things to so many people for so many years that we will never know them all until we meet and compare notes in heaven.

## Art, Music, and Drama in Church History

If the arts were so much a part of worship in those early ages, what has happened to them? In the first centuries after Christ, the house churches continued to use such things as mosaics and paintings to teach about God. During the middle ages, when illiteracy remained almost universal, stained glass windows and passion plays were designed to teach the Bible stories.

But human nature remains the same. People still take the precious gifts of God and make idols out of them. The medieval church in particular enslaved the poor just as the pharaohs did to build ever greater edifices—meant to show the glory of God, yes, but also to enrich the coffers of corrupt church leaders.



Cathedrals were coated with gold and jewels while the people around them spent their brief lives in misery and disease.

The Protestant Reformation in the 15th-17th centuries defied this human exaltation along with other false teaching. Protestants said people don't need an intercessor between them and heaven—we have Jesus, the Great Intercessor, already. People were not bound to an earthly authority but to a heavenly one. When they left the churches, and especially when they came to the “New World,” they were so determined to live lives of simplicity and purity that they may in some ways have “thrown out the baby with the bath water.” Some churches would allow no paintings at all, or no musical instruments, or even no singing. Early hymn writers were condemned because people said we should sing only words already found in Scripture, never write any praise of our own. [See chapters 5 and 6 of *Sing with Understanding*, which deal with hymn history; esp. p. 85.] Some sects such as Quakers, Mennonites, and Amish allowed only one pattern of clothing and only certain plain colors.

In our day, most of us have come to realize that the God who created this world obviously loves beauty, variety, and color. He made people, snowflakes, and flowers unique and

different from each other. No sunset is exactly the same. Birdsong styles are innumerable. And if there were any more doubt, just look at the differing gifts and abilities God gave each person in one small group or church or family. If He means us to devote our whole selves to Him, that means *all* our gifts and abilities, which originated with Him to begin with. We can worship God best with those things He made us best at.

## How Can We Reintroduce Art, Music, and Drama Today?

Our denomination began during what is known as the Second Great Awakening. It was largely founded by people in New England and Midwestern states with Puritan strains in their backgrounds. We tend to be very nervous about letting emotion have much place in our own beings, let alone in worship and arts because, let's face it, they are all about emotion! So how do we begin to restore the place of the God-given arts in worship?

### • Pray. A lot!

Be sure you have leadership on board, and be sure all actions are transparent, compassionate, and have easy evaluation built in.

### • Start small.

It is often easiest to begin with music (close to the style your congregation already likes). Teach one or two new songs at a time, and don't expect everyone to immediately welcome a whole new kind of service. The “Praise and Worship Music Industry” of the late 20th and early 21st centuries can actually be as misguided and human-exalting sometimes as the medieval church was. Listen to each song and determine if it really has a message you want to send, one that will resonate with the people who will hear and sing it. Be sure to leave room for lament as well as praise. Not everyone in the sanctuary is feeling particularly joyful on any given Sabbath, and the church exists at least as much to comfort the afflicted as to afflict the comfortable.

Flat art such as painting is an easy first step too. It's difficult to say why, but we are more easily accepting of paintings of Jesus, or of nature, or even imaginative depictions of heaven than we are of a drama about the same subjects. Try having an exhibit of art created by everyone in the congregation who wants to participate.

### • Little children still lead.

People will love skits and plays done by children. One Adventist church had some people who seriously felt they could better express their worship to God in liturgical dance,

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 fisherfolk, 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). ●

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## 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!



## FORMED OUT OF THE EARTH/BIRTH

Artist and designer **Shelley Poole** won the new Avondale College of Higher Education Fine Arts Prize for her painting above, *Formed Out Of The Earth/Birth* at the 2012 Manifest Creative Arts Festival.

Shelley, a Master of Arts (Research) student at Avondale, speaks of a “rich depth of experience during the creative process.” At times, she says, it’s “shifting, stirring and almost a confronting kind of bittersweet agony.” *Formed Out Of The Earth/Birth* is a product of this “bittersweet agony.”

“[It] reminds me that opals, among other precious treasures, are created only under intense heat and pressure, and that there is often purpose behind the periods of life that are hard to handle.”





# PAN-EUROPEAN ADVENTIST YOUTH CONGRESS

S E R B I A



## POWER *of* ONE



30 JULY - 04 AUGUST  
NOVI SAD **2013**



ADVENTIST YOUTH MINISTRIES DEPARTMENT  
EURO-AMERICA DIVISION  
THIRD EUROPEAN DIVISION



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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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