

# Living Creatively In The Image

Yo Yo Ma, world-renowned cellist, plays a comforting piece as the names of thousands of terrorist attack victims are read aloud. U2 leads an ecstatic crowd in singing a portion of Psalm 40 mid-concert; all hands raised and a sense of wonder filling the stadium. Two local church musicians quietly worship over a cancer patient who will die that evening. A businessman makes his children's Saturday morning pancakes in the shapes of Saturn and Mickey Mouse. A pastor paints biblical truths on the canvas of hearts with the brush of passionately spoken words. A computer programmer employs principles of logic and design to make complex tasks accessible to the novice. An elderly woman eyes her garden through a sculptor's lens, ensuring the shapes and colors you encounter in her back yard will take your breath away. A songwriter wrestles with lyric and melody, crafting a song that will inject biblical truth into those who sing it. An administrator sires a detailed spreadsheet laced with formulas, equations and numbers dancing with numbers. A mother decides that her children will be her art; and young lives are fashioned over decades by daily acts of love, wisdom and generosity.

Have we covered you yet? Creativity is expressed in many ways, and what makes it sacred lies deep in the heart of every person who creates.

## The Sacred Image

*"First this: God created the Heavens and the Earth – all you see, all you don't see. Earth was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness. God's Spirit brooded like a bird above the watery abyss."*

*From Genesis 1 in The Message*

First, not business or task. First, not necessity or responsibility. First, not duty or obligation. First, the God of the heavens and the earth *created*. Play and work become indistinguishable from one another as the created order spills from God's waterfall of imagination and administration. The penchants of God define a creative space that we call "the universe."

**To Live Is To Create** God lives; therefore He creates. It is His nature to say what He has to say in the world, in the myriad of ways He has to say it. Whether He expresses Himself by sculpting galactic phenomena in the far reaches of space or in devising skin and slime colors for over 500 species of snail, He creates.

Zephaniah suggests God sings (Zeph. 3:17). Genesis and Revelation suggest He gardens. The Epistles suggest He writes. Genesis suggests He

paints and sculpts. Chronicles suggests He is an architect and designer. Numbers suggests He counts, Job suggests He has an affinity for marine biology and the Psalms even suggest that God laughs (Ps. 2:4)! God has many ways of expressing Himself creatively in His world.

All things began with God at creative craft, alone in His celestial studio, probing the depths of an eternal imagination. Then, turning His eye to the dust of earth, God considers His own image, too sacred for reflecting simply in cosmic configurations. In that moment, the God of the heavens and the earth – brace yourself – decides His pinnacle act of creativity would be...to have children.

**Where Babies Come From** *"God spoke: Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature so they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, and, yes, Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of Earth. God created human beings; he created them godlike, reflecting God's nature. He created them male and female."*

*From Genesis 1 in The Message*

# Of God

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The Hebrew word for “image” in this passage is “tselem,” which we comfortably translate to mean “likeness, or resemblance.” Yet the literal meaning of the word is far more potent, far more compelling to the Story. The word “tselem,” translated “image,” is most closely related to our word “progeny.” It is a word used to relate that a child’s physical, social and psychological image genetically reflects the image of its parent. It is the inescapable truth that most people realize in their 40s or 50s: that it is a joy (and possible curse!) to reflect the looks, personality traits and even thinking patterns of our parents. In like manner, human beings are children of our Father in heaven. Inescapably, though we may fight and kick and scream, our eyes always betray us; they bear His image.

**It’s In Our Bones** As progeny of God, creativity is in our DNA. We cannot escape it, and we do great harm to ourselves and to those around us when we try! You are creative. I am creative. Every human being that has ever existed on the planet has been creative, in some way, shape or form. Often unbelievers reflect facets of God’s image inadvertently – their art testifying to a buried sacred lineage. When Jesus indwells us,

He revives our deadened souls, stirs the water of our creativity and becomes the pneumatological impetus and eternally ordained focus of our expression. This is true whether we are storytelling, feeding the poor, caring for a neighbor or leading people in worship.

### Sacred Creativity

*“Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits. All kinds of*

*things are handed out by the Spirit, and to all kinds of people! The variety is wonderful....”*

*From 1 Corinthians 12 in The Message*

In the film *Chariots Of Fire*, the runner Eric Liddell is asked why he loves to run so much. “When I run,” Eric answers, “I feel His pleasure.” What is it that you do, that when you do it, you “feel His pleasure?” I would contend that whatever came to your mind, is a language that your soul speaks with God, a language through which God speaks to you, and a language through which God will speak to the world through you!

In this light, creativity becomes not

an option or luxury for the Christian, but rather a necessity; it is your unique language of prayer, a language of the soul for others and for Jesus’ ministry to be enacted through you. We must live creatively to be whole, and to fulfill God’s purposes through us.

A sacred life is one that begins with God, puts God at the center, and places God at the end of all things. Sacred creativity pursues the same goals, by expressing God’s truth in the world,

reflecting both the beauty and pain emanating from His creation.

**Serving With Our Creativity** *“Don’t push your way to the front; don’t sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don’t be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.”*

*From Philippians 2 in The Message*

I was recently in Rome with a group of Vineyard leaders and we took time to drink in the beauty of a city that is itself a work of art. Upon entering the Sistine Chapel, with its magnificently painted ceiling and wall, I began to weep. My

**“Creativity is ... a necessity for the Christian”**

# Living Creatively In The Image Of God

heart was full because someone had used a language to express worship that said what I wanted to say to God. How amazed I was to learn that Michelangelo was a reluctant fresco painter, preferring to sculpt rather than bend his neck for five years to fulfill a commission from the Church. Yet, the sacrifice only

continued to influence my own creativity as a follower of Jesus. In the dream I was standing in a room, holding hands with twelve musicians in a circle. Around us, the room was changing – a gym, a cathedral, a living room, a street, a stadium, a studio. “Why are we here?” I asked the group. In one accord, this

## “Our creativity must ... breathe life into the community”

enhances the impact, and whether from a right or wrong motivation, Michelangelo’s offering has impacted millions of lives through the centuries.

Our creativity is not made to be simply self-indulgent, though it is intended to minister to us as well. Our creativity must also breathe life into the community - it for the blessing of all of us. Whereas creative people can tend to cave in on themselves, exploring the universe God has placed within, we are made to better the community around us by offering our gifts within the context of community – a community who will sometimes appreciate the gift and sometimes not. That never should change the servant’s heart with which we offer our gifts to the Church, and to the world.

### A Dream For Creative Servants

I had a dream a few years ago that has

circle of friends answered along with me, “We are here to serve.”

Live creatively, directing your life and others’ lives toward God. Worship with your creativity, serve others with the language of the soul God has given you, and allow Jesus to “draw all men” to Himself through the sacred ingenuity He has placed inside of you.

*All scripture passages taken from The Message by Eugene Petersen (NavPress Publishing Group, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000).*



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