

Ministering to the **CREATIVE SOUL**

A Manifesto on Ministry to
Creatives for Creatives and
the People who Love Them



Dave Weiss
AMOKArts.com

Ministering to the **CREATIVE** **SOUL**

A Manifesto on Ministry to
Creatives for Creatives and
the People who Love Them



Dave Weiss
AMOKArts.com



©2012 by David C. Weiss

All rights reserved, however I am a firm believer that ideas that spread win, so please share these ideas freely. No portion of this book may be reproduced for commercial use in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, scanning or other—except for brief quotations in critical reviews or articles without prior permission of the author.

Published Mohrsville, Pennsylvania by David C. Weiss for AMOKBooks. AMOKBooks, AMOKArts and A.M.O.K. Arts Ministry Outreach for the Kingdom are trademarks of David C. Weiss

Cover Illustration by David C. Weiss for AMOKArts.com

ISBN-13: 978-1477672549

Library of Congress Cataloging-in Publication Data

Weiss, David C. 1963-

Ministering to the Creative Soul: A Manifesto for Creatives and the People who Love Them/David C. Weiss

ISBN-10: 1477672540

Weiss, David C., 1963- 2. Christian nonfiction-United States

3. How to

Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973,1978,1984 Biblica. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.



Each One should use whatever gifts he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

—1 Peter 4:10 (NIV)



Table of Contents

Dedication 7

About this Book 8

 Why Minister to Creatives 8

 Manifesto? 8

The Back Story 11

 A Ministry Born of Failure 11

 The Struggle 13

 A Word About Terms 14

 My Origins 15

 Each One and Whatever 18

The Call 20

 You Are Your Ministry 20

 Two Kinds of People 21

Understanding Creatives 24

 How Creatives Experience the World 24

 Creatives Must Create 25

 The Fair and Unfair Attributes Assigned to Creatives 25

Impacting the Culture 39

Creating a Church Culture of Creativity 41

 Every Creative Needs a Venue 41

 A Place to Fit 43

 A Word of Caution 43

 An Environment of Support 44

 A Safe Place to Fail 44

 What a Safe Place to Fail Isn't 45

 How to Create a Safe Place to Fail 45

 Everybody Gets to Play 49

 Working with Different Skill and Ability Levels 50

 Different callings 52

 How much is it about the arts? 52

 What Do You Want to Do? Who Do You Want to Reach? 53

Appendix 55

 The Short List, 16 Things You Need to Do to Reach and Minister to the Creative Soul

Creative Ministry Case Studies 59



Dedication

To my Nana, Beatrice Steininger, who always saw to it that I was up to my eyeballs in creative supplies, from paints to model kits, to puppets and ventriloquist dummies. Thank you for planting the seeds of creativity in my life. I hope you can see what's come of it. I miss you.



I

About This Book

Why Minister to Creatives?

Throughout the world a shift is occurring. Never has there been a time when creativity has been more essential. Many industrialized nations are moving away from manufacturing economies to creative economies. People are being bombarded with more messages than ever before and have more avenues to get their information, entertainment than many could have ever imagined. With so many things vying for our attention, messages will need to stand out as they never have before. Thrown into this mix with all these other messages is the most important message of them all, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. How will we communicate it to the next generation? We will need new ways to communicate the unchanging message of the Gospel to an ever changing world. Clearly this is a time for the creatives in the Church to rise and shine. It is equally clear that the Church needs to be reaching out to the Creatives in the community. This manifesto is designed to help churches to understand, embrace and minister to the creatives within their walls and reach out to those beyond.

Manifesto?

Right out of the gate you may be asking why does he call this book a “manifesto?” Some may find this word very off-putting. This is



largely because the most famous manifesto is Karl Marx's *A Communist Manifesto* as well as the fact that radical, subversive groups tend to call their written rants "manifestos." Well hopefully the concepts found in these pages are somewhat radical (in the most positive of ways) and I will do my best to keep the ranting to a minimum.

In recent years I have been very influenced by the work of Seth Godin. I first found out about him through *The Catalyst Podcast*. His thoughts have really opened my mind to some new possibilities. Were you to pigeon hole Godin, you might call him a marketing expert, though his work goes far beyond marketing or perhaps he has just been really successful at expanding the scope of marketing to where we realize, as he says in one of his books, "We are all marketers." For years I tried to find a publisher for my books and thoughts on arts ministry (or, if you prefer arts, in ministry) and was usually told it's too small a niche. Godin's work helped me to realize I don't need to wait for someone to "pick me." Maybe art ministry is perceived as a small niche, but this concept is really a lot bigger than art in church. It's about capturing and nurturing the creative heart, and putting it to work for its intended purpose, to bring honor and glory to God. If I can help even one person to help another person to find Jesus and use his or her gift for the Kingdom, then it's a work of eternal significance. Secondly, given the influence creatives can have over the culture, combined with the Christian mandate to reach the culture for Christ, perhaps ministering to creatives should be a much larger niche.

About a year ago, Seth Godin set out on a venture called *The Domino Project* designed to revolutionize the way books are published. The focus of the project was the rapid spread of important ideas. As Godin puts it, "Ideas for our readers, not more readers for our ideas." The books put out during the project were usually quite short, easily digestible and easy to put into action. Godin calls them "manifestos."

This book is my manifesto. It's a series of ideas for reaching and nurturing creative people for their Creator, Jesus Christ. Some may believe that this is too small a niche. I believe they're wrong. The fact

Dave Weiss



that you hold this book in your hands shows you do too. Niche or not, we have important work to do. Creative people (and I believe we are all creative) are creative because God made them that way on purpose. We've all seen that creativity can be used for great good or great evil. Great Kingdom work will be done by those who care enough to minister to creatives, and by the way you don't have to consider yourself a creative to minister to creatives, you just need to love and support them and allow them to flourish. This work is too important to wait to be picked by a publisher and deemed worthy for the masses. Thanks for picking this book. My prayer is that God will use it to spark a dream in you or fan the dream you already have into a flame, a light that shines, so that people may "see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (NIV)



II

The Back Story

A Ministry Born of “Failure”

My name is Dave and I’m a creative.

I have always been a creative. To quote Lady Gaga, I was “born this way.” To quote a much greater source, I am “God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God created in advance for [me] to do.” Ephesians 2:10, slightly paraphrased. The thing is, while I have always known I was creative, I haven’t always known I was God’s workmanship. As a creative, I have always felt somewhat misunderstood and usually had a hard time fitting in. We creatives don’t all feel that way, but I did and those “alienated” feelings without a faith in God left me in a very bad place. I’ll chronicle how I got from there to here later in this manifesto but suffice it to say when I found Jesus and figured out where my gifts and talents fit into the body of Christ, all I wanted to do was help everyone I could to find their “fit” in this awesome thing called the Church.

I decided the best way to do this was to start an art group in my church. I had become the youth leader months before and thought perhaps the best way to start the art group would be in my youth ministry. It didn’t work. Oh we did some really fun creative projects and I’d



like to believe they helped my students to take the teachings to heart but it didn't become the group I'd envisioned. My next thought was to gather creatives from the local churches. That didn't really work either. Sometimes getting artists to work together is kind of like herding cats. I was really feeling like a failure. I had this vision and I just couldn't seem to bring it to life. By now you might be thinking why am I reading this? This guy is clearly under qualified. Not so fast.

You see I kept on ministering. Maybe my youth group wasn't becoming an arts ministry, but these God-given ideas were useful in helping my students to learn to follow Jesus. Maybe my art group wasn't gelling and getting where I thought it should go, but I was connecting with other creatives in other churches who were seeking to use their gifts to serve the Lord. Maybe everything wasn't looking as I envisioned, but I was continuing to be faithful and give God my best and out of that a new ministry was born.

God just kept giving me ideas. More than I could use at any one given time so I would write them down. I already knew there were others out there who were seeking to use their creative gifts to serve the Lord. I began to wonder what would happen if I shared these ideas with the larger Church. About the same time, I was learning web design for my day job and the result was what would become AMOKArts.com. Through that venue God has allowed me to minister to creatives all over the world with ideas and encouragement. It has opened doors for me to travel all over the U.S. and meet a lot of people, teach them what I've learned and learn more than I ever would have had my first vision come to fruition the way I imagined it. I still have that vision for a creative group and I have no doubt that it will one day become a reality and when it does, the experience I am gaining with what I am doing now will be invaluable.

Why do I share this story? Because if you embark on a creative ministry, there will be things that feel like false starts and failures. There will be times when the distance between you and your vision will seem huge and discouraging. If you minister to creatives, this



frustration will just be compounded, because everyone you minister to will likely find themselves in this place often. The reason for this is simple. Creatives **MUST** fail! We don't have a choice in the matter. Well actually we do, if we never try anything, we won't fail, but if we do that we cease to be creative. To be creative is to fail and fail often. The thing is these things aren't really failures. They are the things that teach us, the things we learn from, the things God uses to guide us on the path to victory. Christ-following creatives will become very acquainted with Romans 8:28 "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (NIV)

One of the first things every creative Christ follower (and those who love them) must learn is that God is always good and always knows what He is doing, even when we don't have a clue. There is no substitute for faithfulness. When we have a vision, we need to hold onto it, persevere and we need to let God steer. Failures can lead to awesome successes and fear of failure leads to stagnation. You would not be reading this book if some of my earlier efforts hadn't failed. What can God do with your "failures?"

The Struggle

If I were to write a book on how to minister to (fill in any ethnicity here) you would probably find me incredibly racist, unless of course it was my own ethnicity. Even so the book would still be pointless. Why? Because people are different. In any ethnicity or for that matter any people group, you will find the entire spectrum of lifestyle, politics, wealth, poverty, etc. The struggle in writing this book is similar. Creatives are not a monolithic group. True they all have a creative bent, but, as stated earlier, I believe everyone is creative, some have just buried it deeper than others or have applied it to other facets of life. For the purpose of this book, I want to narrow the term "creative" to the artistic community, the cultural creatives if you will. Even among this group there is tremendous diversity. We have:



- visual artists (a group that can be further divided into a multitude of disciplines)
- musicians (again as diverse a group as there can be)
- dancers (ditto)
- multimedia (ditto)
- video/film (ditto)
- photographers (ditto)
- technical/sound/lighting (ditto)
- theater/drama (ditto)
- designers (ditto)
- architects (those strange artists who are set apart by their ability to do math)
...and on and on and on.

It's a very diverse group, all with many subsets, all with different talents and requirements and qualifications and disciplines. Add to that the multitudes of personalities, ability levels, etc. and you will begin to see the dilemma. Ministering to visual artists is in some ways very different than ministering to musicians, for example. This book will include a lot of generalities that won't work for everyone. You might even be reading all of this and thinking, this is just too much to consider. Don't give up too soon. The creative community is nothing more than a microcosm of the body of Christ—a whole bunch of diversely gifted people, who, if brought together in Christ, can do amazing things in service to God and others. Add to that the fact that the abilities of creatives are usually much more visible and can often draw a crowd and you begin to see the unique Kingdom possibilities in ministering to creatives. Much like any other ministry, the biggest best things you can do is get to know the people God has given you, meet them where they are, love them and help them to become what God has created them to be and discover what God has created them to do to His glory.

A Word About Terms

I am a visual artist, primarily a cartoonist, designer and painter. While all the people I listed above fall under the general heading artist, when I speak of artists in this book, I will be referring to visual art-



ists. My general term for all of the above will be “creatives” and when speaking specifically about people working in a specific discipline, I will call them out by name.

My Origins

You may wonder why I wrote this book, or perhaps even what qualifies me to write it. Hopefully my story will clarify that for you. I have been a creative virtually my whole life. I truly believe it’s my God-given gift. Some of my earliest memories are of creating. I absolutely loved to create, making pictures, telling stories, working with puppets, “doing shows” for my younger sister and cousins. I was pretty much always creating. My creative moments were happy times. The rest of childhood was not so great. I had good parents and a good home, but I was one of those kids who never really fit in. Maybe it was my “artistic temperament” or my insecurities. Perhaps I was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. Whatever the case, I really took a lot of grief from the other kids. I always loved to create and tell stories and even did some performing, though eventually my societal role as human target cast all that into the background. I kept it hidden until by the time I was a young adult, I was absolutely phobic of speaking in front of anyone. The only time I didn’t get too much grief was when I was making art. It was the one time when my peers saw what I could do as having some value. There were times I felt almost accepted because of art. Art became my refuge and my hiding place.

Eventually it wasn’t enough. I needed to find a place to fit and without a faith community, I made some poor decisions in the name of fitting in. I had my heart set on going to art school. My parents thought that would be a waste, so I went to school 400 miles away from home to pursue a career for which I had no aptitude. I lasted a year before I washed out and ended up living back at home with my parents, determined to become a professional artist. I worked a series of fast food jobs before landing in a printing factory. I was told I could work my way into the art department, which never happened. Depression was taking its toll and I began to self medicate with massive quantities of alcohol. I was on an extreme downward spiral. One night I hit bottom



and cried out to God. It was the simple prayer of a desperate man, “God help me.” Within a few weeks of that night God began to answer my prayer.

To make a long story short, my downward spiral was mercifully cut short by a blind date. My sister, not liking the way I was drinking, decided to set me up on a date with a girl she worked with. Unbeknownst to me, the girl didn’t drink (I always felt like I needed a few drinks to talk to a girl, bad plan!) and her dad was a minister, which would have been a deal breaker, had I known in advance. I figured her dad would take one look at me, find out I hadn’t been to church in ten years and throw me out. We went out on our date and I fell for her almost right away. She started inviting me to church and I went the first time just to make her happy. My intent was a nominal commitment but God got a hold of me almost as soon as I walked through the door. The girl’s dad didn’t throw me out. He met me where I was, answered my questions and showed me a lot of kindness, grace and patience. I became a believer in Jesus Christ at 23 years of age. Less than two years later, I married the girl. I guess this all goes to show that when you ask God for help He will help.

The danger in making a long story short, is it sounds like everything was easy. That’s not really true. I came into that church with all the baggage. I was learning and growing but there were still a lot of insecurities. One of them manifested in Sunday School. I loved being with my class. I loved the huge piles of things I was learning but there was one thing that filled me with anxiety. We would sit around the table and take turns reading the Scripture. Now I was quite literate, but my fear of public speaking made it sound as if I wasn’t. I would stammer and struggle and I was quite self-conscious about it. If you had told me that one day I would be a preacher and a speaker, I would have said you were out of your mind.

When I joined the church, the church did something wonderful, something that every church should do. They got me plugged into a ministry. They helped me to start serving and getting “invested” in the



life of the church. This is vital for all new believers. The problem was it was the wrong ministry. The folks in this rural church looked at me and saw a 23 year old young man and figured I would make a good trustee (the people who fix and maintain the building and grounds). It was a reasonable assumption. Most guys my age who grew up in the country had those skills. I didn't, so I didn't make a very trustee. I showed up, I did my best, but I was floundering and my insecurities were manifesting in big ways. My guess is the insecurities would have won the day and derailed my involvement in the church, were it not for the pastor.

The pastor of the church, Bill Waugh was 30 years old at the time. I admired this guy immensely and the close proximity of our ages made him easy to relate to. He became a good and trusted friend. I would have done just about anything for him, which was good because one day he asked me if I would do something for him. There was a little fear in me, because up to that point my service to the church was not going particularly well. Bill asked me if I would paint a backdrop for vacation Bible school skits. I was shocked. This was something I actually knew how to do and do and I did do it well, so well, in fact, that other churches would come to our vacation Bible school and borrow our backdrops when we finished with them. They were passed from church to church in our region. That annual painting became a big part of my ministry but it was more than that. It was an open door.

After a few backdrops, I was asked to act in one of the skits. My fear of public speaking kicked in and I almost said, "No" but I was assured that this particular character was sort of a silly/stupid character who wore a goofy costume. People were supposed to laugh at me, so I gave it a shot. It went okay and led to other acting opportunities. One year they needed a teacher for the third grade class. I figured I was smarter than a third grader so I gave it a shot. Eventually I became the VBS director, then Senior high Sunday School teacher, youth leader, licensed minister, ordained minister, church planter, pastor and eventually started the speaking ministry I have today. Again this is a long story short but what I hope you're seeing is how much my life was



transformed by someone identifying my creative gift and putting it to work to the glory of God. I believe in this process so much because I am a product of it.

Incidentally, Pastor Bill also lives this out in how own life. Bill is a car guy who is really interested in racing. When he was at the church, he had this amazing slot car track in the basement of the parsonage that the kids used to love. When Bill moved on to the church he pastors today, he combined his love of photography, model building and racing into a ministry at his local dirt track, where in addition to his photography and modeling skills, he has become their chaplain, which just goes to show, working in your gifting can take you to all kinds of places to minister to all kinds of people. God did that on purpose.

Each One and Whatever

If I made all this sound like my transformation to ministry was really quick and easy, I apologize. While art eventually became a big tool in my ministry, there were times where it almost derailed me. Remember art was a refuge early in my life. I would run to it when the rest of life hurt. When I came to faith, that should have been the role of God. I was trying to be a professional artist and my faith life and my work life were really divided. I was working full time and freelancing a lot. I had a young family and a chip on my shoulder. I had something to prove. I was going to be a famous professional artist. I was going to show them all and when problems arose in life, I buried myself in my work. God should have been my refuge, but I was running to my drawing board instead. Art became an idol and I had placed most of my life on its altar. Eventually I became convicted of this, but for a while I fought the conviction.

The turning point was October 4, 1997, Promise Keepers' *Stand in the Gap*. I was invited to go along with the guys at my church and I almost passed on the opportunity. You would not be reading this book if I had because God used that day to change my life forever. A million men stood on the mall in Washington, DC for a day of prayer and repentance. I know this sounds very egotistical, but I felt like every



speaker that stepped up to the microphone, came there just to talk to me. God used that day to break me down and build me back up. I waved the white flag and surrendered. I knew what I had to do, I quit art. I laid it on God's altar and said I would never pick it up again until I was doing it for Him. I got my call to ministry that day and without the pressure to become a famous artist, I could really focus on it.

On the way home from DC my friend Troy and I hatched a plan to take a group of students from the church to the Creation festival the following summer. Neither of us had worked with youth or been to the festival before, but sure enough in June we were there. By that fall I was the Sr. High Sunday School teacher and youth leader but we've already covered that.

The art came back in Vacation Bible School, because most of the great things that have happened in my ministry started at VBS. I was loving doing youth ministry, but I was really looking for a way to make my teaching stick. I had thought about trying some art projects but I was really reluctant, the sting of my idolatry still pretty fresh in my mind. My son Chris was acting in the skits that year. He was very young and his job was to come out dressed as a town cryer and say, "Hear ye, Hear ye, the word of the Lord and then give the memory verse. On this particular night the verse was 1 Peter 4:10 "Each one should use whatever gifts he has received to serve others..." That verse just reverberated through my head as if God Himself said it. The next day the art ideas came like a flood and the ministry that would become AMOKArts was born.

I hope you can indulge my taking some time to tell you my story. I think it's important in the context of this book because it shows both the upsides and the downsides of ministry to creatives. I've long been of the belief that if you give creatives a venue to create and you continually share with them the love and will of their creator, if you cast a vision for a purpose that is bigger than just self fulfillment and gratification, they will do great things for the Kingdom. When a person whose been created to create comes into relationship with their Creator, look out, the possibilities are limitless.



III

The Call

You are Your Ministry

Shortly into my ministry, I attended a Youth Specialties workshop at a local church. The main speaker, Dave Ambrose, made a statement that threw me a little bit. He said, “You are your ministry.” The prideful legalist in me wanted to say, “No, Jesus is my ministry.” but instead I listened and he was right. Of course Jesus is the source of my strength and pointing people to Him the objective of my ministry, but the point was, God made me the way He made me so I could minister to the people He would put in my path. God made me a creative person. He put within me the ability and the desire to create. Beyond that the experiences and trials I have faced in my life give me compassion and understanding for people with a creative bent. I’ve been there and I understand. Of course he has also given me all sorts of traits that allow me to minister to a wide variety of people, but since creatives are the focus of this book, we’ll stay with creatives.

I am my ministry, and you are your ministry. How has God made you? What are your passions, your likes and your dislikes? What are your experiences? Don’t get stuck in just listing the positives either. Ministry involves meeting people where they are. Sometimes the hardest, most painful experiences of our lives, when offered up to God, become amazing tools to be used to meet people at the place of their deepest need. Romans 8:28 is still in effect. “And we know that



in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose..." (NIV) Sometimes the things that make us look at God and say "Why?" are the very things that will one day be redeemed as we use the experience to help someone else. God can use anything we will give Him to His glory. Part of the reason I spent so much time telling you my story (warts and all) was so that you might see that very thing. God has only managed to put one perfect person on this planet. The rest of us have our strengths and weaknesses. The good news is God can and will use all of it and all of us for the good, if we will submit to Him and follow Jesus. So if you are your ministry, what kind of ministry should you have?

Two Kinds of People

The one question I can almost hear you asking as I write these pages is "Do I have to be an artist to minister to creatives?" The answer is no. As a matter of fact the vast majority of the people who have been used to bring me to this point in life probably would not consider themselves creatives. Rather they have been people who were willing to love me where I was and encourage me to put my gifts to use for the Lord. Basically if you can love people and meet them where they are, and if God is calling you, you can minister to creatives.

I do a lot of workshops at ministry conferences and it's almost always the same. The first thing I do is poll my audience to find out who is who. The mix usually seems to be about 80/20, i.e. 80% "non-creatives" and 20% creatives. The creatives are there for obvious reasons. They generally want to find some ways to use their gifts to serve the Lord and/or to minister to other creatives. The almost always larger group are people who don't consider themselves creatives but who want to minister to the creatives within their churches and communities. Sometimes they want to have a creative group to fulfill some need in their ministries, sometimes they just have a few creatives (or one) that they know and love.

If I had to guess, I'd have to say the audience for this book is similar. Most people don't consider themselves creatives. Pablo Pica-



so once said “Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up.” If this is true, and I believe with all my heart that it is, then somewhere, maybe deep inside you, is an artist, a creative. You see I believe every child of the Creator God is creative. Maybe not with a brush or a pen or whatever creative tool you may think of as you futilely try to dismiss yourself from the list of the creative, but God has given you the ability to solve problems, to fix things, to make things happen, to find a way to get something done and by definition that is creativity. I told you, everyone is creative, even you. Relish it and use it to be a blessing in someone’s life.

Seth Godin has this to say about art in his great book *Linchpin*: “Art isn’t only a painting. Art is anything that’s creative, passionate, and personal. And great art resonates with the viewer, not only with the creator.

What makes someone an artist? I don’t think it has anything to do with a paintbrush. There are painters who follow the numbers, or paint billboards, or work in a small village in China, painting reproductions. These folks, while swell people, aren’t artists. On the other hand, Charlie Chaplin was an artist, beyond a doubt. So is Jonathan Ive, who designed the iPod. You can be an artist who works with oil paints or marble, sure. But there are artists who work with numbers, business models, and customer conversations. Art is about intent and communication, not substances.

An artist is someone who uses bravery, insight, creativity, and boldness to challenge the status quo. And an artist takes it personally.

That’s why Bob Dylan is an artist, but an anonymous corporate hack who dreams up Pop 40 hits on the other side of the glass is merely a marketer. That’s why Tony Hsieh, founder of Zappos, is an artists, while a boiler room of telemarketers is simply a scam.

Tom Peters, corporate gadfly and writer, is an artist, even though his readers are businesspeople. He’s an artist because he takes a stand,



he takes the work personally, and he doesn't care if someone disagrees. His art is part of him, and he feels compelled to share it with you because it's important, not because he expects you to pay him for it.

Art is a personal gift that changes the recipient. The medium doesn't matter. The intent does.

Art is a personal act of courage, something one human does that creates change in another.”

Whether or not you consider yourself a creative, will you look at this definition and call yourself an artist? I hope so because if you will bring this level of commitment to the people God gives you, you will minister to their creative souls and be a great blessing to their lives. Use your bravery, your insight, your creativity and boldness, to fire the creative imaginations of people God is calling into a wonderful, deeper more intense relationship with Him. Stand by their side as God takes their abilities to heights that only He can imagine. Guide them, bless them, help them and realize that the creative God who created them to create also created you to bring out of them all they can be and do. Creatively minister to their creative souls. It may very well be what you were created to do.



IV

Understanding Creatives

How Creatives Experience the World

Remember what I said about generalities. These are tendencies but creatives, like everyone else, are a diverse group. There are a lot of stereotypes of the arts community as a whole. There are a lot of behaviors attributed to the “artistic” temperament. It is not my intent to blanket all creatives with these attributes. Ministry is largely about meeting people where they are and as such this listing may be helpful.

Ministry is also about the redeeming power of Christ. This listing is designed to help the believing artist to take his or her own inventory and see what needs improvement. None of these are excuses for bad behavior. For the Christ following artist, the preeminent aspect of our lives should be to bring honor and glory to God. My great hope and prayer is that one day phrases like, “Well what do you expect? He’s an artist.” will no longer be said.

The list is also designed to help non-artists to know what to look for as they love and minister to artists. Again, these are generalities. The only way to really understand someone is to get to know them and live in relationship with them.



Creatives Must Create

The first thing you need to know about creatives should be the most obvious. Creatives must create, it's in their DNA. They have a knack for seeing a better way and a better world and are passionate about bringing it into existence. For this reason, they tend to struggle with the status quo and the phrase "That's the way we've always done it." is practically an obscenity to them. Part of ministering to them is to give them an outlet to bring their visions to reality, i.e. to create. While the vast majority of this volume deals with how to do that, it is important that we establish the rudimentary fact that creatives must create up front.

A big part of ministering to creatives is seeing them through the frustration of the distance between their vision and the current reality. It involves knowing when to champion their vision to the rest of the group and when to help them rein it in. You will need to understand the culture of the church and/or community enough to help them find the battles they can win versus the ones that will cause unnecessary hardships. Ministering to creatives involves helping them to feel loved, learn the boundaries (because boundaries are not evil), help them to serve faithfully and under authority, so they can build the trust they will ultimately need to bring their vision to reality. Most importantly you will need to help them discern the voice and the call of God from just a really cool idea and how to honor God with the creative gift He has entrusted to them. It will not be easy, the tension between vision and reality makes that so, but few things are more rewarding than helping a God-given vision become the new reality.

The Fair and Unfair Attributes Assigned to Creatives

The Artistic Temperament

We often speak of the artistic temperament. It is usually used as a blanket statement for such things as being emotional, melancholy, depressed, intense, sometimes volatile, even unstable. Of course the reason for these stereotypes is partly legend and partly because over the years, creatives have displayed all these attributes and more. Now



to be sure some of these things are clinical and require treatment but in certain circles this type of behavior has been associated with artistic genius and is practically expected. For example, we seem to expect “diva” behavior from the very talented or at the very least many will excuse it. Again, we begin by meeting people and loving them where they are and introducing them to Jesus. From there the mission becomes helping them to become fully devoted followers of Christ, i.e. disciples. As you most likely know from your own life, this can be a long drawn out process. However the process of discipleship is a process of redemption. We offer God our whole lives and ask Him to, in the words of the Psalmist, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139:23 and 24 NIV). This means we are trying to help people move from the artistic temperament to the temperament of Christ. There is little room for being a Diva in the Kingdom of God. It is hoped that joy would replace melancholy, intensity would become divinely redeemed intensity grounded by faith, volatility replaced with Godly passion and instability would be stabilized.

Hear this and hear it well. Redemption is the work of the Spirit. It is not our job to change people. If you’ve ever tried to change someone, you know how difficult that is. Changing people is the Work of the Spirit. We are called to introduce people to Jesus and help them to become disciples. You will not completely change a person’s temperament. What we do instead is bring them to Jesus and the Word and invite them to follow.

Though some people will be in awe of the artist and excuse all kinds of things because the person’s talent, being an artist, a creative and having the artistic temperament, is not a license for bad behavior in every day life. This is amplified when the person moves under the magnifying glass of calling themselves a follower of Christ. We need to lead people to put honoring God above our temperament and living accordingly.



Creatives Can Often Be Loners

I've long compared trying to get creatives to work together with herding cats and almost every creative ministry leader I have ever met agrees with that assessment. This is especially true of visual artists and writers mainly because their work requires little to no collaboration. I'll be the first to admit that, while I am an extrovert who thrives around others, I wrote this entire book in solitude. Writing for me requires quiet. I'm not antisocial, it's just part of my process. That being said I also realize that if I spend too much time in solitude, I start to get a little too far "into my own head" and many other creatives share this sentiment as well. Solitude may be good for my process for a while but in large quantities, it's not necessarily good for me. One thing that has helped is incorporating creativity into my quiet time. This helps me because when I start going too internal, I remember to fellowship with the One who is with me even when I am otherwise alone.

The larger issue for the minister to creatives is, what does one do to build community among people who thrive in solitude? First you accept their need to create in solitude, and that there will be times when they need to be alone. One thing I have learned about community is that its value is in the sum of its parts brought together and so it can be with a community of creatives. Create something that is too big or too diverse to be tackled by a single creative. I have had great fun over the years working with theatrical productions, designing, building and painting sets, intermixing with cast and crew and pit. I could probably paint the entire set by myself, but it would never get done on time and so I work with others and the collaboration and conversation are wonderful. More than once I have felt like I do more ministry crawling around on a set with a paintbrush than from my pulpit. Some creatives may resist community, and some may need a certain amount of solitude to do what they do, but all Christ following creatives need some community. Help us to work on things that are bigger than us and that we cannot do alone.



Disorganized and Unreliable

These two are a little tough because some of this is measured by the standards of a world and a culture that really don't understand the creative process. Every creative has a process, and sometimes that process makes them appear to be disorganized and unreliable, when really it is just how their process works. Once again, I don't want to encourage bad behavior, and certainly Christ doesn't either, but there is some understanding of the creative process needed here. A lot of the misunderstanding comes from the idea that creativity is just like any other discipline and sometimes it's just not. Creativity cannot always just be turned on and off at will. We really sometimes are just waiting for an idea that just doesn't come. This can be mistaken for unreliable. Of course some creatives are unreliable and if you as a creative fall into this category, repentance is required. It doesn't honor God to let the people who depend on you down.

The disorganized part is in some cases just plain true. I fall into this category though I am trying to change that, especially in the areas where others are depending on me. One reason for a lack of organization can be the idea itself. Sometimes ideas are sort of like lightning in a bottle. When an idea comes, you have to act on it and sometimes you have to act fast. This is often where the disorganized part comes in. For example, I have been on a creative roll for months now and my studio looks like a bomb went off inside it.

Part of being a God honoring creative disciple is changing these behaviors or at least learning to work through them. Part of ministering to creatives is helping them through this process. I have solved the disorganized part to some degree by having a place apart to create. My studio space is a corner of my basement where few others spend any length of time. When it's disorganized, I can close it off from the rest of the house. Of course there are times when having an isolated work space is not possible. When a person creates in community, they are responsible to the community and that involves keeping organized for the sake of the community. As far as the reliability part goes, the Bible admonishes us to "let our yes be yes, and our no be no." This means when you come to your creatives with a project, you come with the



deadline, budget and as many of the constraints as possible in place and then you give them the choice of saying “yes” or “no.” If the answer is “no,” it’s okay to try and change their mind, but you have to be willing to let their no be no. If the answer is yes, your job becomes to keep them accountable and provide the help you can for them to “ship it” on time and under budget.

Perfectionism

A lot of time the unreliable part comes from perfectionism. They don’t want to put out a work until it is perfect. This is admirable, but for many creatives it is also self defeating. We need to move from a spirit of perfectionism to doing the best we can with the time and resources we have. No more lamenting if only I had this that or the other thing. Deadlines and budgets are really our “friends.” They switch the creativity from perfectionism to “Here are the resources I have and the time I have. How can I make the best creation within these parameters?”

It is said that Steve Jobs had a programmer that was working on an early version of the Macintosh computer. As the deadline approached, the programmer was continually asking for more time to perfect and tweak. This guy was being an “artist” as a programmer and that is admirable. What he was failing to understand though was if he didn’t deliver the product, no one would ever experience all his hard work. It is said that Jobs stuck to the deadline telling the programmer, “Real Artists Ship.” Sometimes we artistic types can be so caught up in tweaking and perfecting that we hide our creations from our “audience” yet the audience is the reason we are creating, isn’t it? There has to be a time when the work is finished, good enough and it needs to be shipped

For example, a big part of my speaking ministry is “speed painting” i.e. large paintings done in a very short period of time, usually less than ten minutes. I often tell people, “This is not the best painting I can do, but it is the pest painting I can do in ten minutes.” The deadline switches the focus, I now have ten minutes to create an image



that will illustrate the story that is on my heart to share. The painting's purpose is not to hang in a gallery. It's purpose is to draw someone's heart into what I pray is a life changing story. If I got all artistic and demanded more time, I would lose the opportunity to share the story and the story is what I'm there for. Understanding the parameters, I give that painting my best for ten minutes and then "ship it." I'm not saying demand people to speed paint, it is a very specialized skill that took a long time to develop. Set realistic deadlines and help them to succeed.

Idealistic/Visionary

One of the wonderful things about being a creative is the ability to see things as they could be and/or should be. Unfortunately this is also one of the most trying things about being a creative. To some degree, we have been given, as Romans 4:17 states it the ability to "...[call] things that are not as though they were." (NIV) which is a wonderful blessing. The challenge for the creative is to hold onto faith and our vision during the times when the distance between vision and reality seem pretty vast. The challenge for the minister to creatives is to remind the creative that we are not responsible for any more than our own faithfulness.

Success is in the hands of God. We need to remember that His thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are not our ways. Similarly failure is also in the eyes of the Lord. What we perceive as failure, may be anything but in the eyes of God. His intent for a project might be totally different than what the creative (not to mention the most hypercritical church board member) can comprehend. God's purpose might be to use the creative and his/her project reach a multitude or a single solitary person. His purpose might be to use his/her work to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth or just move it forward an inch. He might want to use us and what we do, to help a person receive Christ or we might be the first of a thousand voices that it will take to reach him. God might use what we do to reach the world, or he might use the entire effort to do nothing more than grow the individual creative in one small area of his or her life. We may never know how God



will use us and what we do, and we have to be okay with that, trust the Lord and the vision He has given us and just be faithful to do the next right thing.

One of the verses that has always given me great comfort in those times when the distance between what should be and what is appears to be huge is Philippians 1:6 “... being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (NIV) Some people misread this to say that we will see victory in everything we do. That is NOT what the Scripture says. Instead, it says He (God) who began a good work in [us], will carry it through to completion (again God will complete it, not us). And when will it be complete, “in the day of Christ Jesus,” in other words in the day when Jesus comes back and sets all things right. The visionary and the idealist in me don’t like this passage. I want to see everything through, see it succeed and receive the accolades. That’s not my job. The accolades, and the glory belong to God and that can be a little hard for the part of me that is still a little too selfish, but you know what else belongs to God? The pressure for success is God’s too. God never told any of us we had to do it all. We may finish the vision, we may see the results or we may just be one who pushes it a little farther along. I’m starting to see that as liberating. Too often unrealistic pressures squelch our creativity. Philippians 1:6’s reminder lets us off the hook. My only responsibility is the only thing I can control, i.e. faithfully doing what God has called me to do. Let me let you in on a little secret. That’s the most any of us can handle and it is enough! In serving the Lord, faithfulness is success. If you can help a creative to see that, you will minister to him/her more than you can know.

Feel Misunderstood

The reason creatives feel misunderstood is really simple. They often are. Some wear it as a badge of honor believing themselves to be superior to the great unwashed masses. That is pride, it’s not a godly attitude and needs repentance. We are often misunderstood simply because we see things others do not yet see. Giving expression to these new concepts is sometimes difficult, first because we can’t see all the



steps and secondly because we've not been there before. Despite Solomon's lament that there is nothing new under the sun, creatives are constantly trying to do what has not been done. The inability to express a new idea can be hugely frustrating. We can see the solution, but we don't know how to get there or how to describe it. We need to have the time to formulate the process and the expression and until we can get there, we will feel misunderstood. It's just a part of the life of most creatives and it can be very lonely. Ministry to creatives in this stage is fairly simple even if you don't understand, you simply need to listen and you need to remind them that even if they are misunderstood, they are also loved by God and by you. Just listen and love them as they work out the process and remind them of Romans 8:38 that nothing can separate them from God's love in Christ Jesus.

Another way you can be a blessing in the midst of this time is to be a great sounding board. Listen to them and hear them out. This has to be done carefully. Ideas are a fragile thing. Too much criticism, or too many questions too soon can crush an idea before it has a chance to grow and evolve and mature or before the creative has the chance to really think it through. In my own life, I have many people whom I won't tell an idea before I have the details pretty well worked out. I love them dearly but I know that they will question the idea to death before I can make it real. Then there are the rare few that I can bounce a half baked idea off of and they will encourage and spur me on. They seem to know the questions that can be asked or give me an idea how to proceed. What you need to see is both people are invaluable. The encouragers are great early in the process, while the questioners help bring a stronger idea to reality by asking those hard questions. It's all about timing. If a creative wants to bounce an idea off of you, find out where they are in the process and gauge your responses accordingly.

Open to New Ideas

This one again is both a blessing and a curse. It is wonderful to have a lot of ideas and to be very open minded. The problem is this can really take us off of our focus and make it really difficult to get anything done. There is a time to be open minded and a time to be



single-minded. Ministering to creatives involves helping the creative to honor the new idea and be accountable to finishing what they start (as far as that depends on us). I always tell creatives to keep a journal or a sketchbook close by. In this way, we can make a quick sketch or a couple quick notes down on paper. Quick notes and sketches allow us to store the idea for the future. Once they are recorded, we can return to faithfully finishing what we've started. (Don't worry, God is more than capable of pushing the urgent to the forefront when needed.)

Another area where creatives sometimes need help is in the area of discernment. My good friend Tim Wallace first put this into words I could understand when he spoke of "separating the good ideas from the God ideas." This takes some discipline and help is always appreciated. I get more ideas than I know what to do with, partly because I seek them and pray for them, but I also know that when I try to act on them all at once, I get nothing done. By storing them, I can better stay on task and when I do hit the rare dry spell, I take it as a sign to go back to the sketchbooks, asking God to show me what I already have that needs to be done.

Of course the other side of being open to new ideas is less about our ideas and more about ideas that come in from the culture and the world around us. Again this is a great thing so long as the ideas that come in are righteous, Scriptural and God-honoring. Those who minister to creatives must help us to be grounded in the Word of God. Ideas are great. Too many ideas or the wrong ideas can take us off of God's path. You can minister to creatives well by reminding us that there some things need no creativity. We can be as creative as we want with methods, but some things are not meant to change, especially those things regarding God and His Word. One of the great things about God is that He is totally dependable and unchanging.

Creatives Often Tend Toward Liberalism

First let me say liberalism is neither evil nor necessarily wrong. Like all the other "isms" it is a human construct in need of redemption. I really debated about whether or not to add this tendency but



thought it somewhat important especially when the person ministering to creatives may not be liberal. While we are certainly not all liberal, as a rule, the arts community tends toward liberalism. Remember this, our role as ministers is not to change someone's ideology. Our job is to introduce people to Jesus and help them to receive and follow Him. When I hear people trying to pigeon hole Jesus into liberal or conservative, or worse yet, democrat and republican, I find it laughable. Jesus is above ideology. He is everything good about every ideology without any of the baggage, any of the sin. Coming to Jesus is, in a way, an admission that we don't have it all together and an invitation for Jesus to take the best of us and change the rest of us.

It is rarely, if ever, a good idea to begin ministry by trying to change a person's political and ideological bent. Instead we always lead off with Jesus. After all, we all need His Spirit to follow Him anyway, right? As we move from evangelism to discipling, We need to humbly move more and more of the conversation to "what does the Word of God say?" and trusting the Spirit to do His work in the heart of the believer. We are not responsible to change a person's politics or ideology, we are responsible to make disciples of Christ.

Protective of Ideas/Creations

Creatives become very protective of their ideas and their creations. The reason for this is simple. The act of creation is very personal. You take part of yourself and put it out there for all the world to see. Because of this, it is extremely easy to internalize criticism and take it very personally. Jesus needs to redeem this and sometimes only He can. The best we can do is encourage people to give their best and separate themselves from their creations. A huge key to this is to help people to offer their creations to God. When this happens the work itself becomes less about the individual creative and more about giving God glory. A wise man once said "all art is a gift." It's hard to be generous givers when we are trying to protect our work and ourselves. We need to create the best we can with what we have, give it to God and trust Him with it. He is always faithful.



Driven

Creatives are often extremely driven people. I attribute this more than anything to a passion to bring a vision to reality. To make what we see, be. Being driven is great to a point, but often the drive comes from misplaced responsibilities and priorities. As stated earlier, I know this one first hand and even now, redeemed by Christ, there are still times when I am far too driven. There are still times when I am trying to make things happen instead of just trusting God and being faithful. There are times where I act as if everything depends on me and I assign attributes to God of demanding taskmaster and domineering father who will withhold His love if I in some way fail. I do this even though I know both of these things to be lies. There are times when the creation moves in front of the Creator and when that happens I cross a line into being too driven. A minister who can see this happening in a creative and call them on it is a great blessing. It's really easy for me to see this in others, it's not always so easy to see it in me. I praise God for my coaches and mentors not to mention a godly wife, who can snap me back to reality. Sometimes we need to remember as Jesus said, "God made the Sabbath for man..." A loving Father commanded us to take a break and He patterned the act after something He Himself did. A great question to ask an overdriven person is, "If the God of the universe took a break, what makes you think you don't need one?" Help us to be faithful to God and our families and you will serve the creatives in your charge very well.

Again please remember these attributes are just a few of the many attributes that, right or wrong, are assigned by society to creatives. The individuals to whom you minister may have all or none of them, not to mention many I failed to list in this short volume. These are simply offered to give some insights into what you might run into and how to deal with it as you minister to creatives. You basically can't go wrong if you love people like Jesus and help and encourage them to become His disciples. Know this, there are many things that you cannot do, but there is nothing the Holy Spirit cannot do. Helping the people in your care to receive the Spirit of God in their lives through Jesus Christ is the single best thing you can do in ministering to creatives. Love them,



care for them, let Jesus do His work and get out of the way. God has a tremendous plan for the creatives in your care, not to mention his tremendous plan for you. He will do amazing things through them and you, so prepare to be amazed.

Ministering to the Creative SOUL

To this point, and throughout the rest of this volume, I've dealt primarily with ministering to the individual creative in their creativity, but I would be very remiss if I didn't spend some time talking about the spiritual aspect of this ministry. After all every individual is more than what he or she does. Much of ministry is about who we are. Hopefully in ministering to creatives, we are giving them much more than just fun projects to fire their creativity. A ministry that doesn't connect people to their God and His will for their lives is not, by definition, a ministry, is it? The old saying is true. We are called "human beings" not "human doings" and while what we do is important, who we are, our identity as children of God, is more important. So how do we minister to the creative SOUL?

The first aspect is that of connection. Remember art is not the purpose of creative ministry, it is the tool used to connect people to their God. True we serve people by giving them outlet for expression and a way to expand and grow their gifts, but the parable of the vine and the branches reminds, us apart from God we can do nothing. We want to help people to realize their creativity is connected to their Creator. This isn't meaning that we pull some Christian bait and switch, where we lure them in with art and then beat them over the head with a Bible. That is the farthest thing from authentic ministry. Instead, art is the tool that brings people together into authentic community where people build relationships and ministry happens naturally. If the people to whom you minister are already believers, the main focus is connecting their gifts with God's plan and purpose for their lives. When ministering to people who are not yet believers, the first emphasis is on building authentic relationships. The hope, of course, is that the projects may lead to spiritual conversations, and an invitation into something deeper but this cannot be our primary motivation. We need



instead to be open, real and loving, praying and trusting that the Holy Spirit can and will open doors to the Gospel.

As we move toward discipleship, it is important that we follow the admonition for ministers from Ephesians 4:12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (NIV) Ministers are gifted to prepare God's people to serve others, reach others and build up the body of Christ, with an emphasis on all believers becoming more and more Christ-like. We need to teach those creatives in our care how to follow Jesus, how to honor God with our gifts, our attitudes and our lives. We need to understand sin and repentance and forgiveness. We need to search the Word together, pray together and serve together.

We need to look at things like humility, how to honor God and what things dishonor God. We should explore the story of Bezalel and Oholiab (Exodus 31 and 35) the first two artists God called out in the Bible. We need to look at the precise plan God had for their creations and what that means to creatives in our time. We need to look at Isaiah 44:12-20 to explore the danger of making idols of our creations. We should consider the parables of Jesus to understand how the Master Storyteller crafts a story that makes a spiritual point. We should look at the creation account to see how the Master Creator does His work and realize that the first recorded scriptural thing we know about God is that He created and John 1 says the same thing about Jesus. As we connect the creatives in our care to these passages and more they will begin to comprehend that their gifts and talents are more than just cool things to do, they are part of God's plan for the universe.

We need to help them to connect God's story with their story and we need to help them learn to share that story. In short, if we are going to minister to creatives, we need to connect them to their Creator, remind them that they are His beloved creation, not because of what they can do, but simply because they are. We need to help them to real-



ize the love God has for them in Christ and how that love was manifested in the price Jesus paid. We need to help them understand the awesome privilege each of us has received in just being Children of God. Once they understand the relationship with God and His amazing love, we can help them find their part in the plan and how to live out that plan in love, gratitude and faithfulness doing the good works that God prepared in advance for us to do. Without understanding the relationship, the good works become something we do to earn what we have been freely given and God starts to look like a task master. We need to make sure that throughout the process of ministry, we constantly reinforce the love.



V

Impacting the Culture

There have been times over the centuries where the church seems to have been “at war” with the culture. I don’t think this should ever be the case. Does that mean I don’t think we should stand up to sin? No. Does it mean we should never speak out against problems in our society? No, I’m not saying that either, but here’s the problem. If you ask a lot of people outside the church what the church is against, they will have no problem giving a lengthy list. Most of the time, the things on that do not endear us to them. No I’m not advocating that we become people pleasing puppets of the culture, but I am suggesting that we are not in this world to represent what we’re against. No the Church of Jesus Christ is in this world to represent Jesus Christ. My suspicion is that if we did a better job at representing who we’re for, we’d have less to be against. The prevailing wisdom states the best way to impact culture is to create it. This may be the number one reason for the church to be actively ministering to creatives. We need the creatives among us to rise up and positively impact the culture in the name of Jesus.

We need to empower people to create culture that impacts culture. This means we have to encourage our creatives to live out their creative callings wherever God calls them to be. Part of this means we have to be prepared for them to go beyond the walls of the church. We need to tear down the wall between Christian and “secular” art. We need to realize that some are called to create for the Church and there’s



nothing wrong with that, but neither is there anything wrong with our creatives creating for the culture at large. We need to stop seeing creatives who go beyond the walls of the Church as sellouts and start seeing them as missionaries. When a person leaves his local church to share the Gospel in a village in Africa, we applaud him, praise him, pray for him and support him. Why is it of any less value for an artist to leave the Christian sub-culture to create something that will reveal God's truth to the larger culture? We need to prepare our creatives to live and work both inside and outside the Church and realize that both can be holy callings.

We need to understand, and prepare our creatives for, the struggles artists will face outside the sanctuary and we need to applaud them, pray for them and support them as they go out to glorify God by impacting the larger culture. We need to understand that art that draws people to Christ does not always have to literally contain Christ, that some art will be overtly Christian and some will be more "covert." As an example, I sometimes go out and do "street art" and when I do, I rarely paint pictures of Jesus. It's not because I am ashamed of the Gospel, it's because I want to have a conversation with someone who may not be a believer yet. For this reason, I don't do something that is blatantly Christian, but rather I do a piece that is a little more obscure, something that will make the viewer stop, take notice and ask me a question which will lead to a conversation.

Church, we need to realize that a large part of our call as Christians is about what happens the other 167 hours a week, those times when we are beyond the building, being the church in the culture. A ministry that encourages our creatives to make a difference "out there" is hugely important. We have to stop whining about our culture and we need to start encouraging our creatives (as well as helping them and supporting them as they) to create it. A ministry to creatives like that will go a long way toward showing the people and the culture who we're for.



VI

Creating a Church Culture of Creativity

Every Creative Needs a Venue

When someone asks me how to reach creatives, probably my number one response is give them a venue to create and show, or perform, their work. This might include opportunities to share their gifts in the setting of the worship service but let's face it, not every creation will be a fit for your service. It's okay to ask your creatives to create something to be a fit from time to time, but they will become creatively frustrated if they are constantly being asked to change what they do to fit you. The best idea is to create a secondary venue where they can express more fully what God has made them to be and create what they are called to create. It might be a physical room set up as a studio/gallery/performance venue. It might be a publication where writers and artists can share their creations. It might be an occasional event, a concert or film festival. What's really important is that you give your creatives the ability to create their work and share it with the world.

It's also important to understand art is subjective, that there are as many different tastes as there are people. What one person thinks is junk will touch another person deep in his or her soul. Further, people come into the arts at all different ability levels and it's important to have a venue where people can learn and grow. Novices and amateurs



become professional with practice and the experience that comes with exposure. There's nothing wrong with having an expectation of quality, but it is also important that people get the opportunity to show their learning and growth. In performance, this can be done fairly easily with lead roles and supporting casts where people graduate as their ability levels grow. In exhibitions, it may be necessary to have novice and professional divisions, or something to that effect, so that the audience will understand that the artists are at varying levels of achievement and growth.

If we are talking about creating venues we cannot forget the audience. Who is it we are trying to reach with a given performance/exhibition? While some creations may be more for the church and others more for the culture at large, to my mind, everything a church does should be done with the unbeliever in mind. After all the Church is in the world for the purpose of the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5), so when you look at your venue and your performances/exhibitions, it is wise to consider how someone outside your faith community would perceive it. Is the venue easy to access and somewhat non-threatening? Is it comfortable and inviting? Does it communicate a message of love and grace? Is the environment welcoming? Will what is presented reflect well upon the Lord who inspired it? Will the performance/exhibition be rewarding for both the audience and those who created it?

Lastly, I feel it's necessary to say a word about moral standards. Clearly there are some things that are inappropriate for an event/exhibition/venue connected with the Church of Jesus Christ. Part of the responsibility of anyone who ministers to creatives is to communicate the standards clearly and often. This is protective of everyone involved. After all, if the creatives to whom you minister are creating work that the church who sponsors you finds offensive and rejects, no one wins. The church is offended and the creative, who poured his heart and soul into a creation, feels personally rejected. It is far better that everyone knows in advance what is expected and the standards to be followed.



A Place to Fit

Part of the reason knowing the expectations is so important is because what we are really creating here is a place to fit. Creatives often feel misunderstood, sometimes even rejected, by society at large. We spend a lot of time pouring heart and soul into our creations. A lot of the creative process, especially for writers and visual artists, is done in solitude. As a result of these factors, we can become very tied to our creations, so tied that rejection of our work feels like personal rejection, which can be disastrous for ministry. Creating a place to fit means creating a place where the creative feels understood, cared for and loved. It means understanding that each creative has a different creative process and different needs. Much like any other ministry, ministry to creatives revolves around meeting people where they are and helping them to become what God has created them to be. Creating a place to fit, a place where they can be who they are and discover who God made them to be is crucial.

A Word of Caution

I believe the best thing a church can do for creatives is give them a place to create and the opportunity to create. Give them the opportunity to use their gifts to the glory of God and a place where they can fit. Your ministry will do great things for creatives simply by giving them the opportunity to do great things. I believe that to the very core of my soul because as mentioned earlier, my life was radically changed when my pastor found a use for my creative gifts.

I was sharing this one day in a workshop I was doing with my good friend Kerry Jackson from Bezalel Church in Atlanta and as I was finishing my statement, Kerry stopped me with a word of caution. Kerry's church was created for the specific purpose of reaching "cultural creatives" and as such his congregation is about 80% people who consider themselves to be creatives. His experience was a bit different than mine. He has met several, to many, artists who felt somewhat used by the church, as if the only reason they were valued was because of their ability to make art. This is a line we don't want to cross so we must practice caution. Part of creating a place to fit is creating a safe place to say "no." "No, I can't get that done." "No that doesn't fit what



I do.” “No I cant take on that project.” There is nothing wrong with putting someone’s gift to use. We just need to make sure we don’t cross the line into using and abusing them.

An Environment of Support

Ultimately we will serve our creatives well if we can give them a place where they feel supported, loved and cared for. We prepare them with the standards of the community and set the expectations in advance and then help them to be all that they can be within that context. From there our role shifts, especially when it comes to relations with the larger church and/or community. Remember, as I’ve said before, the arts are subjective. What one finds to be junk another will find wonderful. What one finds harmless another will find offensive. Part of your job will be to run interference for the creatives with the community to make sure that the people in your ministry are not needlessly hurt and offended by the self-appointed critics and the “morality police” in your congregation. A wise friend once told me ministry is easy except for the people and as long as there are people, at least until Jesus returns, there will be issues in the Church. If you have upheld a biblical standard of decency with those under your charge, defending your creatives and their work should not really be too difficult.

I’m not talking about coddling prima donnas here and I’m certainly not talking about encouraging bad behavior. I’m merely stating that we all want to be supported and feel like someone has our back. Creating an environment of support is crucial in ministry in general, but it’s especially important in ministering to creatives who have put their heart and soul into the work they have created.

A Safe Place to Fail

It is said that Thomas Edison failed over 10,000 times in his attempt to invent the lightbulb. If Edison had been inventing for the church, my great fear is that we would all still be living by candle light. Not because candles are in some way holier and not because we like the ambience, not even because we are trying to live simply, but merely because we seem to have a low tolerance for failure in the church.



Think about it, how many things has your church tried just once and then never again? Why is that? Isn't it because the first time you tried it, it didn't produce the expected result? It didn't bring in enough people or money or perhaps Sister Erma or one of the big donors didn't like the result. This will not work with creatives.

Creatives by their very nature, will fail. They must. Why? They're creating things that have never existed before and they are not God. They're trying to express God's message for His people in ways that may not have been tried before. Creating is about trying and failing and trying again until it works. Try it once and then never again, simply will not work in any creative process. If you can't create a safe place to fail within your congregation, a ministry for creatives may not be for you. Creatives need a safe place to fail.

What a Safe Place to Fail Isn't

Please don't misunderstand, I'm not talking about irresponsible use of resources and I'm certainly not talking about doing things that are outside the bounds of decency or good taste. I'm not talking about things that are sinful. I'm talking about quality and effectiveness. We're not always going to have a hit on our first time to the "drawing board." It's not always going to work right the first time we try and that has to be okay or the only thing you'll end up is creatives making things that are "safe and boring" which will not make anyone, especially the creative, happy. Creatives need to create and if you're going to have a ministry to creatives you need to let them. As the old saying goes, you need to break some eggs to make an omelet.

How to Create a Safe Place to Fail

First get your resource "ducks" in a row. Know how much you have for a project in advance and communicate this to the creative in advance. They might complain about a lack of resources, but part of being a creative is making due with what you have and getting creative with it. One of the best things that ever happened to me was when I was hired to be the set painter for the local public high school. There was never a large budget and I had to learn to make due. It really



boosted my creativity. Teaching creatives to work within their means will help their relationship with the rest of the congregation as well. True, you will always have some who will complain no matter what resources you use, but for the most part, if you are being responsible from the beginning, people will be much more likely to support you.

Second, make sure the creation is appropriate to the venue. When we creatives get an idea, we want to charge ahead with it. It's our vision and we want to run with it. We sometimes have a hard time seeing how others might react to it. A prime example is my friend Bob, (not his real name) Bob is a comic artist and a very good one. He asked and got permission to do a comic for his church newsletter. He wrote me, very dissatisfied and hurt because his church "rejected" his gift. I asked him to send me a sample and as soon as I saw it, I knew the problem. It wasn't that it was bad work, it was quite well done. It also wasn't rejected because it was biblically incorrect. It was quite scripturally accurate. The problem was a matter of being inappropriate to the venue. You see it was a "Passion of the Christ (the movie)" style depiction of the death and burial of Jesus. It was bloody and gory and totally inappropriate for being placed next to the ad for Mommy and Me class. He either needed to learn to create for the venue or he had to find a different venue for his creation. When you're asked to paint the almost obligatory Noah's Ark mural in the church nursery, you paint smiling Noah and smiling animals, not drowning sinners clawing at the side of the sealed up ark. The second is more accurate, but few will appreciate it and your main "audience," the nursery children, will be terrified.

Part of your task in ministering to creatives is helping them to create for the venue. Sometimes we all have to learn to do what we're told to do and submit to authority, but another part is helping the creatives in your care to find a venue appropriate for their creation. If all you ever allow your creatives to do is create things to fit someone else's expectations, they will be unfulfilled and probably not around very long. This is not necessarily them being prima donnas, after all, if they are connecting to God, a lot of these creations may be exactly what



God is calling them to do. We can't squelch that, we have to help them find the channel to use it.

Thirdly, we need to be able to practice and perfect. Unless it's prophetic art, which is done in the flow of the Spirit, planning and practicing before we're put in front of people is crucial. Putting someone on display before they have prepared is setting them up for the worst kind of failure, preventable, public failure. That can be hard for a creative to bounce back from. Part of creating a safe place to fail is having a congregation that will love and care for the creative, but the other part is helping the creative to succeed publicly.

Fourth, we need to work toward low risk, high reward creating. I'm of the belief that a church creative ministry should not be elitist. Remember we're all about meeting people where they are. Nothing breaks my heart more than hearing about a snobby elitist art group in a church (let the hate mail begin), where only the most gifted can play. When I hear the word excellence batted about, I start to get very nervous, not because I don't believe we shouldn't give God our best, because that's imperative, but because my best today is not as good as my best tomorrow and we all have to start somewhere. A big part of the purpose of ministry is to help people to grow into their calling and that involves meeting people where they are. The best art ministry I have ever seen, filled with some of the best artists anywhere has a motto that I have adopted, Everybody gets to play (more on this later). For now, suffice it to say, they're not fantastic by accident. The great and talented come along side the novices and help them to grow. I believe this attitude is crucial in ministering to the creative soul.

The idea of low risk high reward is that you minimize the risk by helping people to pick and choose projects that fit their skill level or help them to succeed by pairing them with someone with more experience. Don't have the novice painter do the mural in the front of the sanctuary, where a mistake will draw the ire of the congregation. Let him/her start with something that is moveable and removable and grow into the larger more permanent things. Don't give the novice ac-



for the lead, don't put the novice singer in the soloist slot. You get the idea. A safe place to fail means being allowed to maintain ones dignity in the midst of failure. Allow them to work and develop and plan and grow in their skill and allow them to get in front of people in ways that are "safe" to where they are in their growth.

Don't start someone off in something that costs a lot of resources before they have shown themselves faithful in small things. Helping them to learn to do the best they can with what they have will actually enhance their creativity. Teaching them faithfulness, will help them to work responsibly which will enhance their relationships with others and with God.

Remember what we're talking about here. Ministering to the creative soul is more about people than it is about art. It's about helping people create to some degree, but its more about helping them grow in their relationship with their creator and out of that into their calling. Occasionally along the way we will find people who are not called to what they think they are. We have to be really careful here. The arts are subjective and tastes are diverse. No one listening to Bob Dylan's singing ability for the first time would be able to discern the important artist he would become and the first person to get behind Picasso's cubism or Jackson Pollack took tremendous risks, so be careful before you sit in judgment on someone's talents based on your tastes. There are times though where someone has been pushed and prodded to do something for which they have no ability. How do you help them and minister to them? I would try to help them find something new. Pray for them and ask God where He's leading, then guide the person into that by asking them to help you do a project related to their new calling. Help them to shine and succeed. Encouragement always goes further than discouragement.

In the ideal world your creative ministry should have a space of its own, where your creatives can experiment away from the doubting Thomas's and naysayers (every church has them). It should be a place where they can leave paint dry, where their supplies can sit



out without fear that someone will be hurt or that their work will be destroyed or prejudged. Of course this isn't always possible and you have to do your best with what you have and find the creative solution. Be creative.

Finally, have your creatives backs. We always represent Christ, right? Nowhere is this more important than in ministry. It is crucially important that creatives know they are supported. A safe place to fail means that the creative is safe to bounce back from failure and try again. It's crucial that creatives have a place where they can, experiment fail occasionally and learn from it. That's kind of hard to do when the critics pounce. Someone who ministers to creatives needs to learn how to lovingly fend off the naysayers and the critics. Constructive feedback can help a creative grow. The problem is, relatively few people have learned to be constructive. Many creatives are by nature thin-skinned, and while most of us need to develop a thicker hide, we're meeting people where they are here. They need you, as their minister, to run interference for them. They need to be able to trust you to have their back and once they do, they will be able to hear from you the constructive things they need to learn and grow.

Everybody Gets to Play

If anything I write in this book will put me at odds with the arts community, it will be this section. There are several schools of thought when it comes to this topic, but as a minister I come at this from the perspective of ministering to people and that must take precedence over "art for art's sake." There is a tendency to push for excellence in the arts. Again there is nothing wrong with this, we should always strive to give God our best, and there are few things more repugnant to me than the attitude that something inferior is "good enough for church." That being said, if we are not careful, we can also become very cliquish and elitist, reserving art for the select few who do work we like or enjoy. Remember art is extremely subjective, and as long as the work of Keith Haring and Jackson Pollock hang in the same museums as Rembrandt, as long as punk rock and classical music can occupy the shelves of the same store, no one can argue this point. When it comes to creativity, tastes vary wildly.



We must also remember that ministering to the creative soul is more about people than it is about art. In all other realms of ministry, we meet people where they are and so it should be in this realm. Everyone you minister to will not be a professional, nor will everyone want to be. Some people just need to express what is going on in their hearts and souls. I have wrestled with this over the years. Something just felt very wrong about ministry folks serving as judges and gatekeepers over the creative work of others. It felt somehow like people were being excluded. I found it hard to put into words until I visited VineArts at the Boise Vineyard Church in Boise Idaho. Their philosophy was one I quickly adopted. As they put it, “everybody gets to play.” The art ministry is open to everyone from the professional quality creative to the person who just wants to make art. This is the essence of meeting people where they are creatively. They have created an environment where everyone gets to create. I think this is a huge key toward ministering to the creative soul.

Now at this point I can almost hear artists screaming. They have visions of displays of junk work, of the person soloing in the choir even though they can’t carry a tune, etc. They will say subjecting people outside the church to work that is less than spectacular will reinforce the stereotype that the art created by the Church is weak and inferior. There is a danger of that in “everybody gets to play” but handled properly, it’s a very small danger. Remember ministry is about people more than it is about art. “Everybody gets to play” allows everyone the opportunity to experiment, grow and flourish.

Working with different skill and ability levels

“Everybody gets to play” means we meet people at the ability level, taste level and desire level with which they walk in the door. When it comes to skill level and ability level, our goal is to help people to learn and grow. This means we help them to edit and self-critique. We may push them to go deeper, refine and perfect. This is less about getting them to be excellent today than it is about giving their best today. For example, when I look at the work I did early in my career it pales in comparison to what I can do today. It was the best I could do at the



time, but I've grown. My best today is far better but I had to do that work to get to this level. We do creatives a great service by helping them to learn to do the best they can with what they have for today, always keeping an eye toward growth tomorrow.

I am painfully aware that a lot of art is about the audience and when it comes to public displays and performance, excellence is a huge consideration, especially in a ministry situation where the display has outreach as at least a partial intent. I am also aware that excellence is important when the ministry shifts from being about the artist to being about the audience. There does come a time for editing and curating. There also comes a time to steer a less gifted creative to an area in which they are more gifted. There is a certain cruelty in putting someone before an audience before they're ready and that harsh critiques can stifle or kill an artist's desire to create. There are no easy answers to this and you really have to know and understand the heart of the people with whom you work. That is the essence of ministry.

"Everybody gets to play" and excellence can go hand in hand. They have for years in the arts. It all comes down to what I call "appropriate exhibition." Appropriate exhibition is the concept of allowing people to exhibit what it is that they do in a venue that keeps their skill and experience level in mind. Some get the solos, some are in the chorus. Some get the lead roles while others are the supporting cast. Art exhibits can be divided by age or experience levels. This keeps the level of expectation where it needs to be and is good both for the creative and the audience. It changes the attitude from "church art is bad" or "well I guess it was good enough for the church" to "that is piece is really good for an artist at that level of experience." This type of curation is a "win-win" for audience and creative alike.

"Everybody gets to play" allows the arts to become the powerful tool for soul-care they were created to be while appropriate exhibition gives the creative a safe way to get his or her work before an audience.



Different callings

Remember not every creative is called to be a professional nor does every creative want to be a professional. Some just have something inside them that they need to get out. Both should be able to find a home and an outlet in the church of Jesus Christ. An attitude of “everybody gets to play” creates a safe place for people across the spectrum of creative expression and ability to do what they are called to do. Give a “safe” venue for people to become what God has called them to be, pray for them, over them and with them and then trust God to guide. Offer people love and support combined with the permission to explore their gifts and their calling. Give opportunities for them to show the world (if they want to) in a venue that is safe and caring. This will help people to find and discern their calling or maybe just deal with some tough stuff that they need to express. Ministering to both groups is vitally important.

How Much is it About the Arts?

When arts ministry becomes about the arts, it runs the risk of moving toward idolatry. Ministry is always about God, Jesus and people. If we keep that perspective firmly in place God will take care of the rest. The arts are a tool we’ve been given to express the work of God in our lives and His message to the world. This is the role they must occupy in the life of a Christ following creative. Part of the challenge of ministering to creatives is helping them to remember that and keep God and our work in their proper places, i.e. God is over all and art is the tool we get to use to serve Him.

What Do You Want to Do? Who Do You Want to Reach?

If you said everyone, I applaud your tenacity but remember “you are your ministry” and you will likely be most successful if you work in your God given passions. Remember you don’t need to be a creative to minister to creatives, you just need to love them and support them. When you pray about this ministry to creatives, what does God show you? Who really touches your heart? What fires your passions? What or who could you be most supportive of? What do you do best? What



do you care about most? It's in the sense of those questions that I ask "What do you want to do?" and "Who do you want to reach?"

I realize that in the service to God we don't always get to do what we want to do, but I also realize that God gives us dreams and passions and desires and wires us for certain things. Awesome ministries come out of people finding and doing what they were created to do. We can see that easily as we attempt to help creatives find and do what they were created to do to the glory of God, but don't forget, that is also the desire of the Father's heart for you, the minister. He doesn't just want you to help others be what He created them to be, He also wants you to be what He created you to be. Seek God and find the people, causes and things that touch your heart and minister to them for all you're worth. Your ultimate ministry is being what God created you to be and doing what God created you to do.

Ministering to the creative soul is also about God ministering to your soul. It strikes me that I have spent considerable time writing about how the minister will care for creatives but let us never forget the parable of the vine and the branches. We minister best when we are connected to Christ and apart from Him we can do nothing. We are branches on the vine. If we want to bear fruit in our ministries, we need to be deeply and intimately connected to God. This is true for the creatives in your care, but it is also true for you as the minister. Draw near to God and let Him fill you so you can pour out into the lives of all those He will give you. Keep His Word in your heart and mind. Pray continually. Don't just teach this to others, live it yourself and just as you pour into the lives of the creatives in your care, make sure you have someone pouring into you.

Remember [you] are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for [you] to do. Ephesians 2:10 (slightly paraphrased.) You are unique in all creation. Whether you consider yourself to be a creative or not, God may very well be entrusting you to minister to His most creative children and if He is, it will require creativity. Don't worry, God always equips those



He calls and even if your creativity runs short, His is in endless supply. People, especially creatives are God's self-replicating masterpieces, creations given the ability to create. He has called them out to be part of His creative plan for the universe. He has called you too. Let God work through you and in you as you creatively minister to creative souls and prepare to be amazed.

With God all things are possible. The possibilities are endless.



Appendix

The Short List, 17 Things You Need to Do to Reach and Minister to the Creative Soul

We've been through the main points and as you come to actual ministering you will no doubt find things that were not covered in this volume. Even in a relatively short book like this one there is a lot of information so to conclude, I decided to break it down into 16 bite-size action steps you can take to minister to the creatives in your care.

1. Meet People Where They Are

Forget the ideal, start with what's real and with God's help build from there.

2. Know them

This is an essential first step for any ministry. You need to get to know the people. In the case of creatives you need to learn what makes them tick creatively, their personalities and idiosyncracies. Remember this is about more than what they do. It's about finding out who they are and more importantly, who God made them to be. Creatives are individuals, every one of them is different. Knowing them is essential. Also, since ministering is about connecting people with God it is also extremely important to know where they are in their faith journey.

3. Love Them

It's all about relationships. Deep down inside, every person needs to know he is loved. The way we who minister to creatives love them shows them a lot about how God loves them. This is especially important with creatives who often feel misunderstood and even unaccepted. Creatives tend to have be really tough on themselves and if we are not careful they will assign those attributes to God. We need to love them in such a way that they realize that God's love is unconditional, not based on their talents and ability to accomplish goals.



4. Connect the Creative and His gift to God

In ministry we are trying ultimately to connect people with God. It is also really important with creatives that we help them to see that their creative abilities come from God. I fell into this trap early in my career. I was very compartmentalized. God and art were separate and as a result the uses of my gift were not always honoring to God. In fact art became an idol and came between me and God. It was when I began to see that my gift was from God, to be used to honor God, that my life turned around. Connecting a student and his gift to God may really save them from some serious trials.

5. Assess Them

This is where we really start to look at the “doing” part of this. Get to know what they like to do, their goals and dreams and where they are on the journey (i.e. skill level, mastery, etc.) This is not about cutting people from a program, because remember “everybody gets to play,” but this assessment allows you to find the projects that are the best “fit.” This is not necessarily formal assessment but rather looking at what people already create, which leads to number 6.

6. Give Them a Venue to Create

One of the best ways to assess abilities, get to know them, build relationships, etc. is to give them a place where they can freely create. This is not necessarily a formal project, but more likely an open studio type of arrangement. Giving people the opportunity to create freely, connect with others, etc.

7. Create/Find Appropriate Opportunities/Projects

Once you have some idea where your people are at, you can start putting their skills to work. This will take some work because you will want to match people with projects that match their abilities so that they can be as successful as possible. The key word in this sentence is appropriate. Make sure the people match the project and that the project fits its “venue.”

8. Give Them the Parameters in Advance

Nothing frustrates creatives more than rejection. A great way to avoid this is by defining the boundaries in advance. Remind them of the audience of the project, the limitations, the budget, schedule/time



frame and in general what's appropriate for the setting. Knowing the boundaries ahead of time saves time, money, effort and frustration. Boundaries are our friends and they actually help us to be more creative.

9. Allow Them to Be as Creative as Possible

While the parameters are important, it is also important to let creatives create. Give them what they need to know and let them go.

10. Keep Them Accountable

Help your creatives to stay within the parameters. Work with them through the planning process and help them to deliver what they need to deliver when they need to deliver it and help them to work in a way that honors God. Part of what we are doing here is helping people to faithfully serve God and others with our gifts and part of that involves learning to come under authority.

11. Criticize Constructively

Almost nothing works exactly as planned. Creatives tend to put their whole selves into projects and as such tend to take criticism personally. Help them by keeping track of the project, gently guiding them and catching problems while they are easily repairable. Always stay positive and affirm the creative and his or her effort.

12. Create a Safe Place to Fail

Unless you happen to be God, creation involves failure. Ministering to creatives involves allowing failure to be okay so long as we learn from our mistakes. A key to this is knowing people and their abilities and not putting them in too far over their heads. Failure should not be seen as the end but merely the next step on a journey toward success.

13. It's Okay to Say No to a Project

In ministry we represent God. The last thing we want to do is represent Him as a task master who only cares about what we can do for Him. For this reason it must be okay for someone to say no to a project without guilt. Once again its not about the art, it's about connecting people to God through their gifts. The relationship with God is more important than getting our projects done. Use a person's gifts but do not abuse.



14. Low Risk, High Reward

Once again it comes down to what's appropriate to a person's skill level. Since we've already established that there is a certain level of failure in all creation, it is important to minimize risk. Have a person sketch before they start using the pricy materials. Have them make a poster before a mural. Put them in the chorus before giving them the lead or the solo. Entrust them with a low budget project and allow them to grow into the larger ones. Help them to learn to be faithful in small things before giving them the "keys to the Kingdom."

15. Honor Their Efforts

Ultimately God gets the glory for everything we do. That being said there is nothing wrong with appropriate praise for a job well done and appropriate praise and appreciation encourages people to keep going and growing. As stated before creatives tend to put their whole heart and soul into projects (Should we give any less when we are doing things in service to the Lord?). Showing appreciation affirms the creative person.

16. Protect Them

There are two old sayings, "Everybody's a critic" and "Those who can't do become critics." While appropriate, constructive criticism can help us grow, the biting criticism of a jerk with an ax to grind can really crush a creative spirit. As a minister to creatives, you need to run interference for the people in your care, have their backs, affirm them and build them back up,

17. Teach Them to Honor and Glorify God

This one very likely could have been first on the list, but I put it last with a reminder that this one is overarching. It covers all of life, not just our creative life. Christ followers should do everything they do to honor God, remembering that all we have belongs to God. The question may be asked, what if the person is not a Christ follower. Remember throughout this whole process we are ministering. This is about much more than the arts, we are attempting to connect people to God through the gifts He has given them.



Case Histories.

The following are some amazing creative ministries that are doing great Kingdom work. I asked them to tell us about their ministries and what they thought you might need to know about ministering to creatives. These are their stories in their own words.

Ministry:

Red

Chattanooga, TN

Leader: Linda Sines

Texturized worship, Worship that has multi-dimensions allowing us to discover the many facets of God’s story. Red is the name of our worship group. We meet weekly and explore current-day parables. The multi-dimensions include a home-cooked meal, hands-on personal and collaborative art creations, and prayer walking. Our desire is to slow down and allow that sacred crack in time where God can get our attention and we listen.

Red is the weekly gathering of our not-for-profit, F.L.A.S.H Ministries and Planet Altered is the daily forum for our “presence” ministry. We facilitate a community creative arts center, gallery and fair trade gift shop on Main Street, in downtown Chattanooga. The purpose of our physical storefront is to provide an in-community opportunity to encourage and inspire our neighbors who live here and support the merchants who serve this neighborhood.

When ministering to anyone, but especially creatives, it is critical to be empty of self and filled with the Spirit. God in Trinity is the sustainer of creativity. Without total dependence on His direction, our “idea” well will soon be dry and lifeless. We tend to want to maintain creative control and carry out “our” vision of the worshipart, but a “product” destination should not be our goal. Hold the creative reins loosely and free the Spirit. It is the gift of journey where relationships are nurtured and there is intentional dwelling in suspended space with God. cREDO.

Dave Weiss



Ministry:

1heart Arts Ministries

Indianapolis, IN

Leader: Susannah Francis

1heart Arts Ministries provides drama, worship, networking and Bible study opportunities to artists to allow them to grow in Christ and develop their craft, while reaching out to their community with the love of God. We seek to provide a platform where we can connect, equip and encourage Christian artists, all as a means to glorify the name of Jesus Christ.

Connecting (1 Cor. 12:12-20) With Christ

Most importantly we need to seek Christ for a personal relationship. It is said that we must first seek His Kingdom and will for our lives (Matthew 6:32-34). This can be done through personal prayer, Bible Study, Worship and encounters with the Holy Spirit.

With Other Christians

Once we have Christ in our hearts, we will naturally gravitate to those others that have the same passions and ambitions for building the Kingdom. It is important to encourage and strengthen each other as believers because, as many of us know, it can be a hard road to travel (1 Thessalonians 5:10-12). We are constantly looking for avenues to bring Christian artists together through drama, music, Bible Study, and other arts events.

As Christians, we have a powerful tool here on earth that is too often not utilized. This is the Church, our brothers and sisters in Christ. As the Scripture above in 1 Cor. states, Christians are not meant to fulfill their callings and ministries alone. Paul shares a common perception by many Christians that one part or person with a gift, says they don't need the other. This is just completely untrue. We were designed to work in partnership with each other. Through this Godly connection, miraculous things are done.



With Non-Christians

We must never forget that Christ loves sinners, which we are ourselves. Therefore, while building up each other within the Church, we must also be continually reaching out in love to our brothers and sisters that don't yet know Christ. It is the greatest commandment, to love them and show them who Christ is in your life. (1 Cor. 13). It can be a Spirit-led painting, dance, song, film or other artwork that speaks deep into someone's soul and shares in the watering of someone's seed of faith.

Evangelism is a top priority with each and every event and program at 1heart Arts. Our drama productions, music performances and other events are all centered on Glorifying Christ AND showing the work His is doing in our lives. This can be shared easily by pointing to Him while enjoying and loving those around us.

Encouraging (Ephesians 4:11-16)

It is the desire of 1heart Arts that your gifts are continually nurtured and encouraged in order to help them grow as indicated in the Scripture from Ephesians listed above. We seek to partner with you to go where God has called you and seek to allow you to grow into who He has made you to be.

Growth in Christ

We seek to put Christ first in each and everything we do. One of our most powerful programs is our Artist Bible Study, where we learn about what God says to us as artists and as Christians through His Word. We also start each and every program event with prayer and/or worship. In our full-length drama productions, practices begin with at least 15 minutes of devotional study followed by prayer. We believe all is done through the power of God and the only way to do supernatural things in our art, is to stay connected to the Source, Jesus Christ.



Growth in Craft

No matter what age we are or how long we've been performing, God always has more to teach us about our art. Also, something that we have discovered is that God often not provides growth in our current passions, but He sparks new areas of expression to come forth through our devotion to growth in what He has already given us. (Matthew 25:21)

Growth in Experience

Once we have committed to growing in Christ and our craft, we then can grow through our experiences. God will bring the perfect opportunities our way that will allow us to grow and stretch into the person He has designed us to be. It is through these experiences that He will refine and shape us, not only as an artist, but also as a Christian. Because we are a reflection of our Creator we too have a desire to design & create within our world (Genesis 1:27). Whether it is through painting, singing or dancing, we look to enhance the community around us with artistic expressions of what we have in our heart, mind and soul.

Equipping (Ephesians 4:11-13)

Partnership among each other is so important in our growth; not only for encouragement, but also for what gifts we can share with each other. The Church is meant to work as an intricate system, strengthening, encouraging, and serving each other in order to glorify Christ. Besides encouragement, below are some of the gifts that we at Iheart Arts are blessed with that allow us to equip Christian artists.

Administration - God has uniquely equipped us to share creative passions while allowing us to channel both our gifts and those around us into working together as the Body.

Teaching - We offer a variety of learning environments - one-on-one, Bible Study sessions, devotions before rehearsals and various training opportunities. Additionally, we invite Christian artists to join us in attending workshops, conferences and other events where they can grow both in their walk with Christ and their craft(s).



Leadership - We approach this gift in two very different manners, but are effective when they are brought together. We take our roles very seriously and are continually looking for opportunities to grow and learn in this area.

Shepherding - Many in pastoral leadership have termed us as “shepherds.” Leading people to a closer walk with the Lord is our number one priority and it is shown in each and every ministry we are involved in leading. Whether it is devotion, prayer, Bible study, worship or just speaking one-on-one, we look to invite Christ into the situation and nurture the gifts of others into working together as the Body that He intended.

Gifts that Others Bring - God has so richly blessed us with people within our ministry that have a great number of those gifts listed above to lend to the ministry. God is always adding to our number, providing a more balanced and solid foundation for us to grow.

Glorifying Christ (Psalm 86:11-13)

As God’s children, we are meant to glorify Him in each and everything we do. This is especially true in the arts, a pure expression of our heart, mind and soul. Whether we are acting in a drama, singing a worship song or writing a script, our goal is exalt Christ and show all He is doing in our lives. We love our God, He is continually pouring His riches out onto us and we are eternally grateful for Him never giving up on us and seeing us as He designed and not what we are at the moment.

Dave Weiss



Ministry:

Veritas

Lancaster, PA

Leader: Ryan Braught

It's First Friday in downtown Lancaster. Hundreds, if not thousands, of people are crowding the streets of the city of Lancaster, eating in various cafes and restaurants, visiting various art galleries, and shopping in different boutiques. And in the midst of it all is a faith community called Veritas.

Veritas, during each First Friday, holds an art show in their space right on Gallery Row in the midst of downtown Lancaster. This art show features the work of a local emerging artist each month. The artists have a chance to display their work, make contacts, and a chance to sell their pieces, not having to worry about giving a percentage back to the gallery. The core group of Veritas also spends time during the art show talking with people about the art, promoting the art show on the street, and talking with people about the ministry and mission of Veritas.

Two weeks go by, and Third Friday is upon us. Third Friday, in the city of Lancaster, is known as Music Friday. Though not as well attended as First Friday, many people pack the coffeehouses, clubs, and other venues to listen to music of all different genres. And in the midst of it all is Veritas.

Veritas, during Music Friday, holds a Coffeehouse and Open Mic Night which typically features local, emerging musicians. The musicians have a chance to hone their craft, promote a show to their friends and fans, and use the creative gifts that God has given them (even if they aren't aware that their creativity comes from God). It gives Veritas the chance to bless the musician or band, build relationships with those who come, and opportunities to share about the mission and ministry of Veritas



Along with First and Third Fridays, Veritas has also participated in other events that have taken place in the city of Lancaster. We were a venue for the Launch Music Conference and Festival. We were a gallery stop on the spring edition of Art Walk. We also had a booth at the Rock the Block block party on the 300 Block of North Queen Street in downtown Lancaster where we gave out our Veritas Vol. 2 CD, postcards about Veritas, and information about upcoming events.

Veritas also meets each and every Sunday morning for a time of musical worship, prayer, discussion, Scripture reflection, conversation, and community. This time helps to reorient our lives around Jesus, so that we can go back out into the world as missional disciples of Jesus seeking to be a blessing in the world.

Probably the most important thing we have learned from our engagement with artists and musicians over the last year or so is just the simple fact that if you want to engage cultural creatives you must support them and encourage their work. I truly believe that every person we meet is created in the image of God, and for the artists and musicians in our midst, that means that their art is something that is given to them by God, and something that reflects the character and nature of our creative God. It is honestly sad how many artists and musicians feel that the church doesn't have a place for them unless they create "Christian" art. How have we come so far, from being a supporter/patron of the arts, to being seen as a place being against the arts? So my encouragement to you, in ministering to the cultural creatives within the church and also outside the church, is to encourage them. Find places that they can use their gifts, be a supporter or patron of their work, go to bat for them, and help them to see that the art and music that they create can be a very deep act of worship to the Creative God who has given them their creativity.

Interested in learning more about Veritas you can visit www.veritaspa.org or e-mail Ryan at ryan@veritaspa.org.

Dave Weiss



Ministry:

RevelatorART

Star, ID

Leader: Lisa Marten

Tell us a little about your ministry.

I'm a full time working artist. I utilize many different mediums and a variety of artforms within my art business revelatorART. I'm a studio artist, creating paintings for artshows and commissions. I'm also a performance artist, creating paintings live for visual artistic experiences.

Along with a way of life and my income, Art is a form of worship to God for me. I partner with God throughout my creative process. My desire is that His heart may be revealed to people through the art I create.

I have a degree in Psychology and have utilized art therapy with children & adults and have seen the healing & therapeutic results of art when people allow themselves to connect to their hearts through creativity.

I've been a volunteer art minister and leader with the arts ministry VineArts at the Boise Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Boise, Idaho for the past seven years where I've served people through creative activities & artistic focus within ministry. Over the years I've worked side by side with other arts ministers connecting with artists and getting to see people gain a deeper understanding of themselves as creative beings created by God.

Throughout the years I've traveled around the world (sometimes for exploring and sometimes to serve & help in other countries-I've even lived overseas). Regardless what the trip might be for, I've always found myself doing art & connecting with other artists on my travels. My training in all of these areas (whether organized or organic) has prepared me for something new & inspiring.

Recently I've recognized how I can join both art and ministry together by traveling to places where I have connections (people I've



met who are already living & serving abroad to communities small & large) to bring art as a form of ministry & worship to those communities in creative ways.

My travels take me around the world bringing art as ministry to communities near and far. Each place I'm sent to (with it's differing culture & demographics) requires different kinds of art ministry. But art is a language that is spoken by all cultures everywhere.

One place I might work with a small group doing individual artistic activities with them as examples to help them connect closer with themselves & God. Another place I might work with a larger group doing art activities that exercise community by allowing them to work side by side with each other to create something together.

Some places I'm going to I already have had confirmation for, and other places I've yet to know for sure...but wherever I go in this world, whoever I'm meeting with, and whenever I'm going out, I'm partnering with God in this creative adventure!

What should people know about ministering to creatives?

I have found that it's extremely important to remember the importance of listening and caring for the artists' heart. Being an art minister doesn't necessarily require one to be an artist but it does require one to have a genuine desire to understand and encourage creatives in who they are and what they do.

Like with any ministry position that works with people...the need for people skills, communication skills, conflict resolution skills, the ability to encourage a persons' emotional & spiritual life, their talents and giftings, dreams and goals, along with the willingness to be open and available for community with creatives and is essential in being able to connect and minister effectively with creatives. Art ministers, mentors, and pastors who have the ability to understand, encourage and love the artists' heart have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of creatives.

www.revelatorart.blogspot.com

Dave Weiss of AMOKArts.com is available for speaking and painting for your next gathering.



Add a different dimension to your next event with Dave Weiss and AMOKArts.com. Through a unique combination of live, high speed painting, video, story telling and preaching the Word of God, Dave Weiss will bring a unique, memorable and impactful program that will not soon be forgotten.

Dave offers everything from live painting tailored to your message, to a painting with a spoken message, all the way to a full multimedia program, called A Night AMOK. He is available for weekend retreats, youth events, evangelistic events, street painting, creative ministry workshops and more.



Fri. May 4, 2012, 6:00 p.m.
Mt. Zion Road Church of the Brethren
2087 Mt. Zion Road, Lebanon PA 17046
More info: www.amokarts.com

He speaks and paints on a variety of topics including what it means to Be the Body of Christ, Gifts and Talents, the HistoryMakerz youth retreat, and an evangelist program called Pix of JC (Pictures of Jesus). He is currently developing a secular program for presentation in public schools. He will also create a custom presentation based on your theme. Dave's mission is to use the arts to introduce people to Jesus and call those who already know Him to use what they've been given to become what they were created to be.

For more information, Dave may be contacted at amokarts@aol.com or through his booking page at AMOKArts.com



What others are saying about Dave Weiss and AMOKArts



In addition to wonderful artistic talent, Dave Weiss has a heart for sharing the message of salvation in Jesus Christ. He has a firm knowledge of Scripture which comes alive in his art presentation. He has a testimony which many can relate to, and an enthusiasm that is contagious. We were blessed by Dave's ministry, and I think any group of believers would find that to be true.

David Ulm

Pastor, Mt. Zion Rd. Church of the Brethren

I've had the honor of ministering with Dave and I'm captivated by his art, creativity, and heart for God. We are colleagues in using art for Christ and it's so exciting to see how he is fulfilling his calling. Dave has led my congregation in visual worship and I can't wait to have him return!

Kerry Jackson

Bezalel Church, Atlanta, GA, Drawing to the Rock Ministries, Inc.

Your street mural ministry helped us impact 1,000's of individuals in University City and gave our own people the courage to do projects on our own. This led to our students drawing on the streets of Belfast, Northern Ireland and that of the Widener University campus in Chester, Pa. Each time we have been able to create a lasting impression and sow seed into the hearts and minds of people.

Pastor Chuck Kieffer

Lead pastor, The Foundry Church, Associate Chaplain, Widener University
Chester, PA

Dave will bring a presentation that is thoroughly biblical, spiritually passionate, and wildly creative. I heartily commend him to your church or group for a time of spiritual growth and challenge with a little fun thrown in.

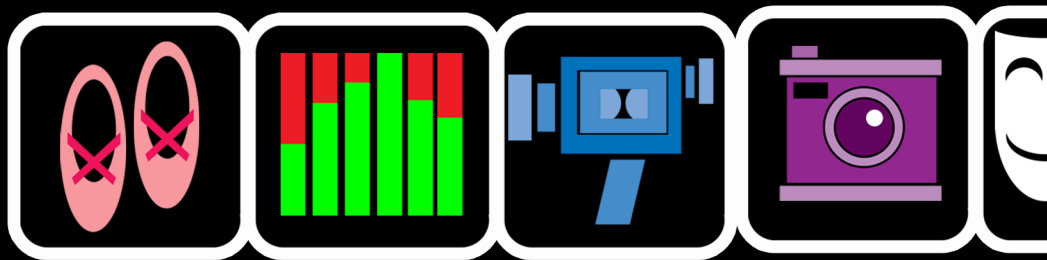
Ray Hileman, Pastor, Miami First Church of the Brethren, Miami, FL

Throughout the world a shift is occurring.

Never has there been a time when creativity has been more essential.

People are being bombarded with more messages than ever before and have more avenues to get their information, entertainment and data than many could have ever imagined. With so many things vying for our attention, messages will need to stand out as they never have before.

Thrown into this mix with all these other messages is the most important message of them all, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. How will we communicate it to the next generation? We will need new ways to communicate the unchanging message of the Gospel to an ever changing world. Clearly this is a time for the creatives in the Church to rise and shine. It is equally clear that the Church needs to be reaching out to the Creatives in the community. This manifesto is designed to help churches to understand, embrace and minister to the creatives within their walls and reach out to those beyond.



Author Dave Weiss is a person whose life was radically changed when a pastor showed him how to use his creative gifts to serve the Lord. He is now on a crusade to help churches to reach, embrace and empower their creatives while encouraging creatives to use their gifts to serve others and spread the Gospel. Dave is a lifelong artist, a pastor, speaker, husband and father. He is the founder of

AMOKArts.com.

