

Excellence in the Arts

Overview

This study is aimed at Christian artists; maybe they're using their art in the church and wondering what to do to maximise their usefulness there; maybe they're practicing their art at the "secular market" and wanting to know how they can most effectively shine God's light into the world.

"Excellence in the Arts" grapples with questions like "why should I strive to be good at my art?" "How should I use my art in Christian and secular environments?" and "Why bother working to be good at my art? Isn't it more spiritual to be a preacher or a doctor or something more spiritual or practical?"

Bible verses (in Times New Roman) and quotes from various books (in Geneva) are given to promote thought and discussion. Further comments (in Tahoma font) are provided to help guide the overall flow of the study and provide guidance for study leaders.

Saturday – Art is good

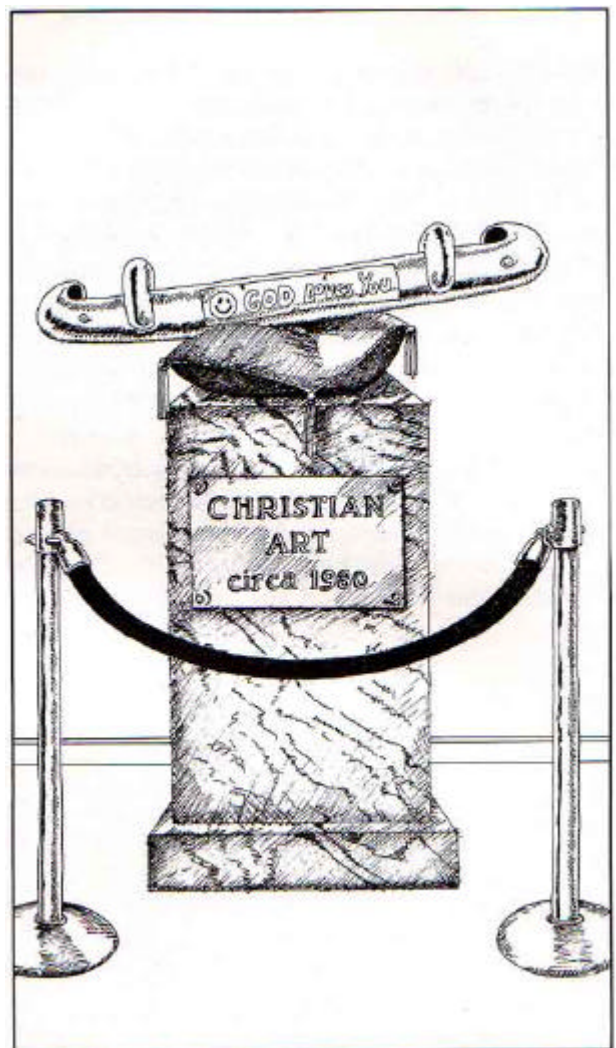
We will look at why it is good to develop and refine our artistic talents. The first thing we learn about God is that He is The Creator. We have been created to be creative, just like God. We can show the God that lives in us through our creativity.

Sunday – Why be good at art?

God displays His glory through his creation. Likewise, we honour God through being excellent in what we create. We show the world how good our Creator is by being magnificent creations in His likeness. God wants us to maximise the time and talents that He gives us, and in doing so we give glory to Him.

Monday – Shining your light

The arts communicate powerfully, especially in our society. We are called to both use our art to build up other believers in the church, and to shine God's light into the world. Today we examine how we can effectively use our talents to give glory to God and draw people to him.



Summary

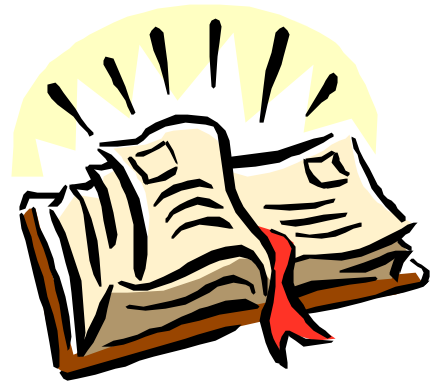
Art is Good

1. Examine views on art from the Reformation and Modernity: "Art is only good if it is useful."
2. God is interested in beauty for its own sake (2 Chronicles 3).
3. The use of the creative gifts is eternal (Revelation 15:2-3).
4. Human creativity is part of being in the image of God (Gen 1:24 – 2:4).
5. Our art can be part of our living sacrifice.



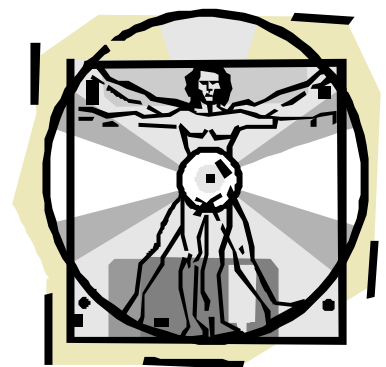
Why Be Good at Art

1. God's creation reveals:
 - a. His character and
 - b. The fact that there is purpose to the universe.
2. Our creative expression reveals things about us. If we are living faithfully as God's creation we will reveal things about our God too.
3. Parable of the Talents: We should use and develop our talents in our Master's service.
4. The widow's offering: It is ultimately our heart attitude and not how talented we are that matters.
5. The spiritual and artistic come together in corporate worship and whenever great art is presented.
6. We should offer God our best!



Shining your light

1. The appropriate mode of expression is dependent on context (1 Corinthians 9:9-23).
2. Artistic gifts are not spiritual gifts.
3. Art as propaganda vs an honest expression of our lives and of honest engagement with God and other people.
4. The artist's accountability –
 - a. To other Christians (Hebrews 10:25)
 - b. To those with other points of view
5. We must live our lives and practice our art, as openly as possible as faithfully as possible (Matthew 5:13-16).



Day 1 – Art is good

1. Check out the 'God Loves You' Christian bumper sticker art on the front cover of this booklet. What point do you think the artist trying to make? This statement was made about Christian art in the 1980s. Do you think this statement is still valid today? Discuss.
2. As a Christian, how can you justify spending time on your art? Wouldn't it be better to spend your time on "more important things" for God's kingdom?

Sometimes we slip into a hierarchy of roles in God's kingdom, with some roles being seen as more important.

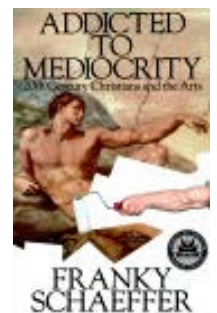
"Ministers and missionaries are on top, and then perhaps doctors and nurses come next, and so on to the bottom, where artists appear. Artists of whatever kind have to compromise everything to entertain. Art is fluffy froth that is no good in the Kingdom of God." [Steve Stockholm, Steve Stockholm, Walk On, p61]

As well as ministering to believers, Christians can make a massive impact in the world through the arts, the language of our generation.

3. The importance that Christians put on their art depends on their philosophy about art. What is your church's view of art? Is it important in your church? What different approaches to art do you see in different churches?

It's useful to see what others have thought in the past so that we can make a better judgement of our beliefs and where we should be heading in the future. Writing in the 1980s of the change in the view of the arts in the church from the Renaissance to the Reformation, Frankie Schaeffer makes the following critique of the church's view towards the arts:

"No longer was it good enough to say that some human attribute was a God-given gift which should be freely enjoyed and given. Now those gifts had to translate themselves into utilitarian [functional or practical] usefulness. Either they had to contribute monetarily or in some other way to the society. They had to become propaganda tools, advertising tools, or monetary earning tools, to be considered useful and therefore tolerated by the church... now everything anyone did had to measure up somehow in utilitarian terms in the church. It had to be useful to the onward march of the church. It had to help in its efforts, in its programs, its church growth emphasis week or whatever." [Frankie Schaeffer, Addicted to Mediocrity, p 30 & 31]



It's exciting that many of the issues that Frankie highlights have been remedied since he wrote this in the 1980s. Steve Stockholm tells the following story to further contrast the varying views of Christianity towards the arts:

"...a youth worker was showing a group of Roman Catholic youth around a Protestant church. As the group came to the main sanctuary, a startled Roman Catholic boy shouted, "You've been robbed!" Compared to a Catholic chapel, with its statues and icon and multiplicity of artistic representations, the basic, empty, dull, drab Presbyterian building was quite a culture shock.

“On the other side of the cosmos, on the other side of time, God moved across the chaos and began to imagine. Colours – blue and green and red and yellow. All the colours somehow mixed together. Mountains. Ocean. Beaches. Rivers. Trees. Canyons. Valleys. Shapes and textures and smells and taste. All these things existed in God’s imagination, even before He decided to make them into a reality and create His artistic masterpiece – the world. God was a Creator (Gen 1:1). The first thing we learn about Him in the Scriptures is that He was an artist. When we read that man was created in God’s image, the only thing we know about God is that He was an artist.

That should have a deep impact on how those who claim to believe and worship and follow His ways work out their salvation and bring in His kingdom in these dawning moments of the 21st century. Yet that young man in north Belfast may have uttered more than a humorous squeal of naïve surprise. Maybe he was speaking in prophetic terms. The church has been robbed. Robbed of art. Robbed of the creative image of God.



“Who has robbed the church? How did it happen? The church has robbed itself, and many well meaning worldviews and ideologies down through the centuries have been the tools that were used.

“The Reformation robbed us of art. When Martin Luther discovered that he could be justified before a holy God by God’s grace and the work of Christ (Rom 3:21-26), it was a crucial moment in Church history. In the ensuing division within Roman Catholicism, many decisions were made in the early days of Protestantism that were taken as being in reaction to withdrawal from Catholicism. With many good reasons at the time, the Reformers reacted to the statues of saints that sometimes replaced God as the focus of people’s prayers. To rid churches of any art seems to have been a rather imbalanced response. The Reformers were quick to quote the second of the Ten Commandments, in which God tells his people, “You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven or on earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them...” (Exodus 20:4). The commandment though, does not forbid art in church. Eleven chapters after the commandments, we find that the first person in the Bible to be described as being filled with the Spirit of God is Bezalel, who God has given “skill, and ability and knowledge of all kinds of crafts” (Exodus 31:1-11). And he is to use these divinely given gifts to decorate the Holy Place of worship. Today most meeting places for worship do not evoke in people the creative heart of God. People are more likely to think churches have been robbed.

“Modernity also has taken its toll on all things artistic. In the past ten years, there has been an amazing amount said about post-modernity, and there have been evangelicals warning against it as a dangerous new worldview. Any of the lenses by which the world is assessed have to be critically studied, their weaknesses pointed out. For Christians, all worldviews taint definitions of belief and need to be stringently critiqued. Holding post-modernity up to the light of modernity as its winnowing sieve is giving an authority to modernity that is dangerous, but seemingly natural within the evangelical world. Modernity itself is a faulty worldview. It is the failure of modernity in fulfilling its great promises of a better world that has led to its demise.

“Under the influence of modernity, the church became obsessed with definitions and seamless doctrine. Modernity was based on a scientific and rational reasoning that everything could be proven by human experimentation and that this exploration of the scientific field could come up with a superior world and a greatly improved human being. In many ways, this worldview was seen as a huge threat to the mystery of faith. Modernism was driving out the mysteries

and belief in a supernatural unseen world, one that was being expressed by a world that could be expressed in clear scientific terms. That Christianity should be taken captive by such a system of thought seems a little incongruous, but it led to a couple of centuries of clear systematic theology, apologetics and an overemphasis on the word spoken and written in the communication of Christian truth. Most of these things in themselves are great aid to Christianity's case in the world, but the loss of mystery, experience and any artistic representation of the Gospel were detrimental.

"The bible uses a wide array of creative ways to communicate truth: law, history, poems, songs, literature, lament, prophesy, proverbs, dreams, angels, miracles, parables, preaching, epistles and visions. When the evangelicals of the world decided that the Word preached was God's most efficient way of communicating, they overlooked the fact that when Jesus was born, God was saying, among other things, that those ways were not sufficient and that the Word had to become flesh (John 1:1,14). God's Word is much more than words. Modernity coerced Christianity into taking the flesh and making it into words again. Art suffered. It was not a clearly defined and conclusive kind of rationalism. It left feelings hanging. Stories or songs might stress some points of theological truth and fail to cover other aspects of the Gospel. They missed the fact that Jesus left the crucial doctrine of atonement out of the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). Jesus, in fact, was much more an artist than a preacher, preferring stories to open the truth and in sometimes oblique ways promising the disciples that those with ears to hear would hear. It could be said that the only writer in the Scriptures with any interest in theological definition is the apostle Paul, and though we thank God for Him and the theological explanation of his letters, we must never lose the balance between this and art.

"The puritans also left a negative legacy on art. Though they were sincere in their attempts to lead their followers into good biblical behavioural patterns, there were side effects. There was a tendency to set up boundaries to help progress toward holiness, but that quickly slipped into a judgemental legalism. The general premise to stay safe from any dangers of "the world" led them into an almost dualist approach to the "spiritual" and the "worldly." Art had a tendency to fall into the worldly camp." [Steve Stockholm, Walk On, ps 99 – 104]

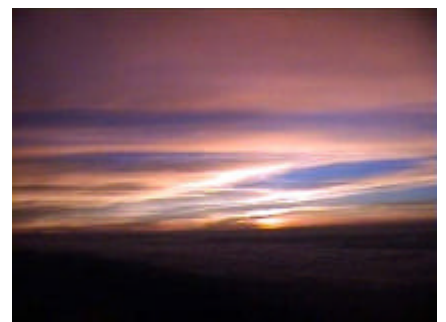
It's no use just "church bashing" for that sake of it if you're not going to take some positive action. If we can see where we've come from and what others have believed we will be able to make a better decision about where we will lead our Christian communities in the future.

4. There are many of examples in the Bible of cases where God has created or commanded seemingly useless beauty. Why do you think God creates things that don't really seem to have any spiritual or practical purpose?

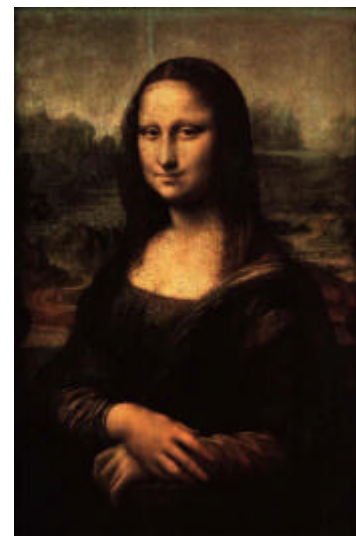
Regarding the many examples of non-utilitarian beauty commanded by God in the temple (2 Chronicles 3) Francis Schaeffer says:

"...it is clear that since all this art was God-commanded, specifically religious subjects are not necessary for art. The factors that make art Christian is not that it necessarily deals with religious subject matter." [Francis Schaeffer, Art and the Bible, p19]

"We could live in a flat uninteresting world, one that had the bare minimum of grey ingredients to support life, one whose



diversity was only enough to provide the minimum of existence. Instead, we live in a riotous explosion of diversity and beauty. We live in a world full of 'useless' beauty, we live in a world of millions of species, we live in a world peopled by individuals of infinite variety, talents, abilities, and this is only our own planet. When one looks heavenward and sees the complexity of the reaches of space above us, the mind boggles at the creativity of our God." [Addicted to Mediocrity', Franky Schaeffer, p 17]



God's creation does not always seem to have some neat simple specific spiritual purpose, but rather it is an expression of Himself as a spiritual being. Appreciating the wonder and beauty in God's world is part healthy spirituality. Creating more beauty in the world is the privilege and responsibility of the artist who God has entrusted with gifts and talents. Everything we do should be an act of worship – honouring and glorifying God – but the simple, blatant and overt may not always be the best way to be ambassadors for God in our world.

5. In what ways can art be a more effective method of communication than the written or spoken word alone?

Art can communicate an intellectual message, mind to mind, but it also has an ability to communicate a message heart to heart without necessarily being reduced to a simple logical message that can be communicated through words. As they say, "a picture paints a thousand words".

6. How do you think art communicates? Mind to mind? Spirit to spirit? Discuss.

7. 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 indicates that spiritual gifts won't be required in heaven because we'll see God face to face. Revelation 15:2-3 indicates that we will be using our artistic gifts to praise and worship God in heaven. What does this tell us about our creative gifts?

"Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears."
1 Corinthians 13:8-10

"And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given them by God and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvellous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages." Revelation 15:2-3

The spiritual gifts will be useless in heaven because we will all speak the same language, know everything that God knows etc. As the human spirit is eternal, Revelation 15:2-3 indicates that artistic expression as a part of our identity is also eternal. The art we do there may not be the same as what we do now, but we can be sure that we will still express our praises to God using our creativity.

8. Check out Genesis 1:27 & 31. Why was God's creation "good"? What made it good? What justified it as a good thing? What purpose did it serve?

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them... God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day." Genesis 1:27&31

God's creation is good because God is good and He creates good things.

9. One of the reasons for God's creation seems to be to show how good He is. What does our creativity reveal about us?

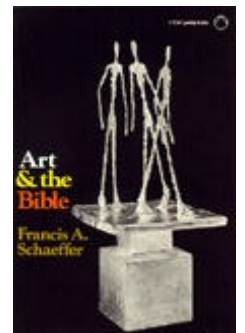
Our creative expression reveals what is inside of us: what we feel, what we think, who we believe we are. God is The Creator. We are made in His image and therefore we are creative. As Christians, our creativity reveals the God who lives inside of us and the Truth from the Word.

10. Do you believe that art is valuable or important? Why?

"A work of art has a value in itself... The Bible says that the art work in the tabernacle and the temple was for beauty." [Francis Schaeffer, Art and the Bible, p33]

"How should an artist begin to do his work as an artist? I would insist that he begin his work as an artist by setting out to make a work of art.

"As a Christian we know why a work of art has value. Why? First, because a work of art is a work of creativity, and creativity has value because God is the creator. The first sentence in the Bible is the declaration that the Creator created: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' So too the first words of the prologue to the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that has been made" (John 1:1,3). Therefore, the first reason that creativity has value is that God is the Creator.



"Second, an artwork has value as a creation because man is made in the image of God, and therefore man not only can love and think and feel emotion, but also has the capacity to create. Being in the image of the Creator, we are called upon to have creativity. In fact, it is part of the image of God to be creative, or to have creativity. " [Francis Schaeffer, Art and the Bible, p34]

"Too often we think that a work of art has value only if we reduce it to a tract. This too is to view art solely as a message for the intellect.

"There are, I believe three basic possibilities concerning the nature of a work of art. The first view is the relatively recent theory of art for art's sake. This is the notion that art is just there and that is all there is to it. You can't talk about it, you can't analyse it, it doesn't say anything. This view is, I think, quite misguided. The great modern artists such as Picasso never worked for only art for art's sake. Picasso has a philosophy that showed through in his paintings.

“The second, which mentioned above, is that art is only an embodiment of a message, a vehicle for propagation of a particular message about the world or the artist or man or whatever. Christians as well as non-Christians have held this view, the difference between the two versions being the nature of the message that the art embodies. But, as I have said, this view reduces art to an intellectual statement and the work of art as a work of art disappears.

“The third basic notion of the nature of art – the one that I think is right, the one that really produces great art and the possibility of great art – is that the artists make a body of work and this body of work shows his world view... I emphasise the body of an artists work because it is impossible for any single painting, for example, to reflect the totality of an artist’s view of reality. But when we see a collection of an artist’s paintings or a series of a poet’s poems or a number of a novelist’s novels, both the outline and some of the details of the artist’s conception of life shine through.” [Francis Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, p 36-37]



Day 2 – Why be good at art?

1. What is “art”? What makes something artistic?

“Even for the great artist, the most crucial work of art is his life.” [Francis Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, p33]

Every part of our lives can be an act of creative expression of who we are. All of our lives should be God honouring, and so be an act of worship. Christians have more to celebrate! Our lives should be vivid, expressive, colourful masterpieces that celebrate God and reveal Him to the world!

2. Check out Romans 1:20. What does what God has created tell us about Himself? How does it communicate this message?

“For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.” Romans 1:20



God's power and divine nature are revealed through his creation. The fact that there is beauty, complexity and love in the world reveal that there is an intelligent, loving and personal being behind it all. We have no excuse for thinking that there is no purpose to our world and our lives. This revelation should send us on a search to find the infinite personal creator God for ourselves.

3. Read Isaiah 40:25-31. Why did God make everything so great? What does God's creation show us about Him? How does this relate to our art?

"To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One. Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing. Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God"? Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." *Isaiah 40:25-31*

God makes things great because He is great. We make good things because God has made us good in His image.

4. What does our creativity reveal about God? How? Why do you think we should strive for excellence?

God's creation shows how amazing and worthy of our worship He is. Our artistic expression tells people about who we are. A Christian's worldview is based on the Truth found in the Bible. Christians believe that they are God's creation and made for a purpose. Our creativity will reveal all this. By being excellent at what we do we show that God has created with meaning and for a purpose. A Christian's artwork should reveal hope and purpose, love and joy – something that is different from the often hopeless message of the world. Creating excellently reveals a little of the excellent God who created us in His image.

5. Read the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30. How can we relate this to maximising the gifts that God has given us?

"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. "After a long time the



master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' "The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' "Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. "'Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' (Matthew 25:14-30)

"Jesus told the parable about a master who gave his servants money and went off to another country (Matt 25:14-30). On his return he asked the servants what they had done with the money. Some had put it to work to make more money, but one servant simply gave it back to the master saying that he had simply kept it safe. The master was angry with that servant. The lesson from the parable is that when you are given a gift, you have to use it. You have to deal with the responsibility and dilemmas of it. You cannot run from it. You cannot hide your

light under a bushel of safety and hope it goes away. You've got to face the consequences of who you are and what your vocation is." [Steve Stockholm, Walk On, p30]

"Kenaniah the head Levite was in charge of the singing; that was his responsibility because he was skilful at it." 1 Chronicles 15:22

"Sing to him a new song; play skilfully and shout for joy." Psalm 33:3

By being excellent at what we do we show how excellent God's creation (including humanity) is. We reflect well on God by doing what we do well. We advertise our God to the world by living in view of the fact that we are love and created for a purpose. We do not need to be the best, just use what we have to its fullest (Mark 12:42-44 and Matthew 25:14-30).

God is easy to please, but hard to satisfy. Like a father he is overjoyed with the first steps of his child learning to walk, but will not be completely satisfied until the child can walk as a grown adult.

6. But what if you're not Picasso or Charlie Parker yet? What does Mark 12:41-44 have to say about what is really important?

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything--all she had to live on." (Mark 12:41-44)



It is the heart attitude of the worshiper that is really important to God. God wants us to honour Him by being good at what we do, but if we are good for our own glory God is not pleased. God takes the little that we can give and makes it great!

7. Check out 2 Samuel 23:1-2. David is remembered for his art. Described as being anointed by God, a singer of songs. Discuss how creativity and spirituality are connected. How did David use his spiritual and artistic gifts together? Discuss.

These are the last words of David: "The oracle of David son of Jesse, the oracle of the man exalted by the Most High, the man anointed by the God of Jacob, Israel's singer of songs. "The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue. 2 Samuel 23:1-2

8. Read 1 Chronicles 28:21, Exodus 35:26, Exodus 36:2 and 1 Chronicles 25:6-7. Discuss the link between being gifted, skilled, willing and doing. What does this infer that people who are blessed with talents and abilities should do with them?

"The divisions of the priests and Levites are ready for all the work on the temple of God, and every willing man skilled in any craft will help you in all the work. The officials and all the people will obey your every command." 1 Chronicles 28:21

“And all the women who were willing and had the skill spun the goat hair.” Exodus 35:26

“Then Moses summoned Bezalel and Oholiab and every skilled person to whom the LORD had given ability and who was willing to come and do the work.” Exodus 36:2

“All these men were under the supervision of their fathers for the music of the temple of the LORD, with cymbals, lyres and harps, for the ministry at the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun and Heman were under the supervision of the king. Along with their relatives--all of them trained and skilled in music for the LORD--they numbered 288". *1 Chronicles 25:6-7*

9. Psalm 33:1-4 encourages us to play skilfully when praising God? Why is it important to give God our best?

Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him. Praise the LORD with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre. Sing to him a new song; play skilfully, and shout for joy. For the word of the LORD is right and true; he is faithful in all he does. Psalm 33:1-4

God wants our first fruits. He wants our best (see the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4). Holding back our best from God shows that we put ourselves above God.

10. Proverbs 22:29 and 1 Chronicles 15:22 tell us that skill can bring power and influence. Think of some examples of people who have exercised their skill. How have they influenced their world? Why do we listen to skilful people?

“Kenaniah the head Levite was in charge of the singing; that was his responsibility because he was skilful at it". *1 Chronicles 15:22*

“Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings; he will not serve before obscure men.” *Proverbs 22:29*

11. Music and the arts seemed to play an important part in the spiritual gatherings in the Old Testament as it does in our gatherings today. If you're going to get into a position of leadership using your arts, what else do you think you have a responsibility to develop other than your artistic skill? Why?

Influence often accompanies artistic skill. It's dangerous if we have people who are only skilful in the arts leading the church. Aspiring Christian artists also need to learn about God so that they can lead the church in Spirit and Truth.

12. How then should we go about developing our artistic potential? Think about some steps that you can take to develop your artistic and spiritual gifts to glorify God.

We need to guard our time carefully, investing it in developing and exercising the skill that God has given us.

Day 3 – Shining your light

1. Where do you generally do you art? At school/uni? At church? Or in the secular scene?
2. Jesus related to all sorts of people in a variety of different situations. How did Jesus' method of communication change for the different audiences he related to? How did his message differ? What can we learn from this?

Jesus often rebuked the Pharisees and teachers of the law with the law that they claimed to know so well, while he taught using gracious stories with people that didn't claim to know God.

3. Do you think artistic gifts are spiritual gifts or do they express spirituality? Discuss.

We sometimes glorify artistic gifts as if they are spiritual gifts. But they are not spiritual gifts in the sense of those mentioned by Paul in Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Cor. 12:31-13:1. Look at the arts in the world. Are Christians more artistically talented than non-Christians because they have some special artistic gift? Art communicates on a different level than the written word alone does, and is often more powerful when expressing something of the spirit, but they are not spiritual gifts.



4. What should be our aim when creating art? Consider again the Christian bumper sticker art from day 1.

"The Lordship of Christ over the whole of life means that there are no platonic areas in Christianity, no dichotomy or hierarchy between the body and the soul. God made the body as well as the soul and redemption is for the whole man. Evangelicals have been legitimately criticised for often being so tremendously interested in seeing souls get saved and go to heaven that they have not cared much about the whole man." [Francis Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, p7]

"...there is another side to the Lordship of Christ, and this involves the total culture – including the area of creativity. Again, evangelical or biblical Christianity has been weak at this point. About all that we have produced is a very romantic Sunday school art. We do not seem to understand that the arts too are supposed to be under the Lordship of Christ. [Francis Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, p9]

"A Christian should use these arts to the glory of God, not just as tracts, mind you, but as things of beauty to the praise of God. An artwork can be a doxology in itself." [Francis Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, p10]

RE the lyrics of "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For"... "There seems to be a belief that once someone makes the initial connection with Jesus Christ, he has arrived. Immediately, a watertight box of solutions is handed to him. No more questions need to be asked – Jesus is the answer! Everything is now explained; there is nothing left to search for. This view is built

on a need for precision and perfection, which has always been an enemy of art, which is all about colouring outside the lines. It is also an enemy of the reality that following Jesus is a journey, not an arrival." [Steve Stockholm, Walk On, p72]

"To have found You and still be looking for You, that's the soul's paradox of love." [Newsboys, Beautiful Sound]

"As Bono said around the time of the Joshua Tree's release: "I think there was a certain uptightness to the first three albums... At one time, I thought you had to have all the answers if you were going to write a song, so it was embarrassing to make a record that was filled with doubts and questions. Then I began to see that many of the artists who inspired me – Bob Dylan, Patti Smith, Van Morrison, Al Green, Marvin Gaye – had similar feelings of awkwardness and spiritual confusion. I realise now, it's okay to say you still haven't found what you are looking for." [Steve Stockholm, Walk On, p76]



"Maybe post-modernism was a better canvas to throw out the truth of God's interaction with Man." [Steve Stockholm, Walk On, p77]

If we only set out in our art to communicate a message about God we risk not representing our journey with God with integrity. We can show a highly simplified version of faith that non-Christians will often reject as trite or clichéd. People will often relate better to our art if we express our spiritual journey without trying to sound like we have it all together. They will often gain more from sharing in your journey than from hearing a distilled version of the truth.

5. If you're a Christian doing your art in the secular world, how can you make sure you keep growing in your faith?

"Bono's respect for the atheist is refreshing. Many believers distance themselves from those with differing views on God, sometimes even within different churches. Bono makes them his friends and then makes himself accountable to them. He has fellowship and sharpens his faith against those with whom he doesn't agree because they are discussing the same issues." [Steve Stockholm, Walk On, p175]



"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another..." Hebrews 10:25

It's important to stay in fellowship with and accountable to other Christians, but we should not underestimate the power of sharing our faith with people who hold differing points of view to yours. It will keep you on your toes and make sure you keep refining your own faith.



6. If you're doing your art mostly in the church, what can you do to make sure that you stay in touch with the people that God wants us to reach (refer Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 4:18-19, Mark 16:15 & Matt 10:16)?

“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.” Luke 4:18&19

“Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.” Mark 16:15

“I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.” Mathew 10:16

It's important when ministering in the church that we make sure we don't get so comfortable being built up that we forget to get out and do the work that we are being built up to do.

7. Check out 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. What does Paul's versatility say about how we should use our art in different situations?

“Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.” 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

We need to tailor our art for various situations. It may not be appropriate to sow and reap with one song. We may only be able to present a positive Christian worldview, to plant a seed, to reveal a little of God to those who don't know Him yet. What is appropriate will depend on the individual artist's judgement at the time with the guidance of their knowledge of the Word and the Holy Spirit.



8. Do you think art made by Christians has to have a spiritual purpose? Discuss.

“Christian art is by no means always religious art, that is, art that deals with religious themes. Consider God the Creator. Is God's Creation totally involved with religious subjects? What about the universe? The birds? The trees? The mountains? What about the bird's song? And the sound of the wind in the trees? When God created out of nothing by his spoken word, he did not just create “religious” objects. And in the Bible, as we have seen, God commanded the artist, working within God's own creation to fashion statues of oxen and lions and carvings of

almond blossoms for the tabernacle and the temple. [Francis Schaeffer, Art and the Bible, p59-60]

"But God's creation - the mountains, the trees, the birds and the birds' songs - are all non-religious art. Think about that. If God made flowers, they are worth painting and writing about. If God made the birds they are worth painting. If God made the sky, the sky is worth painting. If God made the ocean, indeed it is worth writing poetry about. It is worth man's while to create works upon the basis of the great works God has already created.

"This whole notion is rooted in the realisation that Christianity is not just involved with "salvation" but with the total man in the total world. The Christian message begins with the existence of God forever and then with creation. It does not begin with salvation. We must be thankful for salvation, but the Christian message is more than that. Man has a value because he is made in the image of God and thus man as man is an important subject for Christian art."
[Francis Schaeffer, Art and the Bible, p60]



"But as Christians we see things otherwise. Because God created individual man in his own image and because God knows and is interested in the individual, individual man is worthy of our painting and of our writing. Christian art is the expression of the whole life of the whole person who is a Christian. What a Christian portrays in his art is the totality of life. Art is not to be solely a vehicle for some sort of self-conscious evangelism." [Francis Schaeffer, Art and the Bible, p61]

"For some artists there is a place for religious themes, but an artist does not need to be conscience stricken if he does not create in this area. Some Christian artists will never use religious themes. This is a freedom the artist has in Christ under the leadership of the Holy Spirit." [Francis Schaeffer, Art and the Bible, p62]

"Even the Bible is an extended body of books, and it cannot be read as if any one book or any one chapter included the whole; it must be read from the beginning to end. And if that is true of the Word of God, how much more is it true of an artist's work!

"If you are a Christian artist, therefore, you must not freeze up just because you can't do everything at once. Don't be afraid to write a love poem simply because you cannot put into it everything of the Christian message. Yet, if a man is to be an artist, his goal should be in a lifetime to produce a wide and deep body of work." [Francis Schaeffer, Art and the Bible, p63]

9. What should we, as Christians, be trying to communicate through our artistic expression?

"Art forms add strength to the worldview that shows through, no matter what the worldview is or whether the worldview is true or false." [Francis Schaeffer, Art and the Bible, p 38]

"Christians are called to be the salt and light of the world, not the disinfectant and antiseptic."
[Bruce Dickson, SMURFlist]

"The truth of a worldview presented by an artist must be judged on separate ground than artistic greatness." [Francis Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, p41]

"As far as a Christian is concerned, the worldview that is shown through a body of art must be seen ultimately in terms of the Scripture." [Francis Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, p43]

"Even those works that were constructed under the principle of art for art's sake often implies a worldview. Even the world view that there is no meaning is a message." [Francis Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, p44]

[The Christian's major theme/worldview that is expressed through their art is that] "God is there. God exists. Therefore, all is not absurd. Furthermore, man is made in God's image and so man has significance. With this comes the fact that love, not just sex, exists. True morals, as opposed to only conditioning, exists. And creativity, as opposed to mechanical construction, exists. So therefore the major theme is optimism in the area of being; everything is not absurd, there is meaning. But most important, this optimism has a sufficient base. It isn't suspended two feet off the ground, but rests on the existence of the infinite-personal God who exists and who has a character and who has created all things, especially man in his own image." [Francis Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, p 56 – 57]

10. The Psalms tell the story of David's journey with God over time. It shows his highs and his lows. His successes and His failures. The times that he felt God was close and the times that he felt God was far away. What can we learn from David that can influence our journey of faith and as artists?

Our art needs to express the fullness of our life . If we use our arts to express our journey, others will be able to learn from and be blessed by the fullness of our experience rather than just feel like they are meant to be happy and positive all the time.

11. So what do we do with our artistic skills and gifts? Where should we exercise them? How should we exercise them? What does Matthew 9:9-12 have to say about where Jesus shone His light?

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and "sinners"?" On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick." *Matthew 9:9-12*

Consider the two tax collectors in the New Testament, Zaccheaus and Matthew. Christ called one to be an apostle; Christ told the other to go back and collect taxes honestly. Did Christ go on and point out that Matthew's calling was higher, more spiritual? No, each one of us has a responsibility to God to exercise our own talents in his or her particular area." [Addicted to Mediocrity, p54]

The Old Testament refers predominantly to the arts being used in the sanctuary and in the Jewish services. In the New Testament we are encouraged to use our gifts to encourage each other (Ephesians 5:19) but there is also a massive emphasis to share

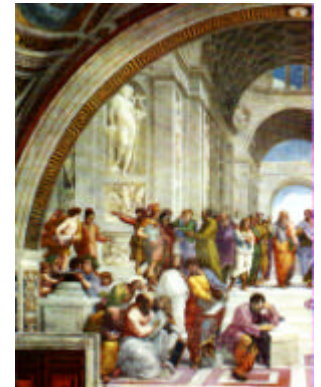


the Gospel with the Gentiles. This applies directly to using our artistic and spiritual gifts to shine light in the secular world, not just in the church building where there is already heaps of concentrated light.

Like Paul in Athens, it is good to be able to speak in the language of the day so that we can communicate our message in a language that is relevant. For the artist that means exposing ourselves to the styles of the moment, and being 'in the world, but not of the world.'

First, Christian art today should be twenty-first century art. Art changes. Language changes. The preacher's preaching today must be twenty-first century language communication, or there will be an obstacle to being understood... Let me firmly say that there is no such thing as a godly style or an ungodly style." [Francis Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, p51]

If artists only exercise their art in Christian circles all we do is window dress the church. As well as hanging out in the synagogues, Jesus shone his light into the real world. He was the "sinless friend of sinners" (*Yancey, The Jesus I Never Knew*)



12. What does Philippians 2:12-16 and Matthew 5:13-16 tell us about witnessing for Christ in the real world?

"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life--in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labour for nothing. "*Philippians 2:12-16*

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." *Matthew 5:13-16*

If we are serious about our faith journey – working it out with fear and trembling – we will shine like stars, being a witness to God, His goodness, and his Message. We don't primarily have to go out and bombard the world with our beliefs and point of view. If we go out and live loud in the world people will be able to see the difference and take notice!

13. Talk about where you think God wants you to shine your light. What might be challenges in you doing this? Pray for each other.

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More about U2

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Day 1 – Art is good

1. Check out the 'God Loves You' Christian bumper sticker art on the front cover of this booklet. What point do you think the artist trying to make? This statement was made about Christian art in the 1980s. Do you think this statement is still valid today? Discuss.

2. As a Christian, how can you justify spending time on your art? Wouldn't it be better to spend your time on "more important things" for God's kingdom?

3. The importance that Christians put on their art depends on their philosophy about art. What is your church's view of art? Is it important in your church? What different approaches to art do you see in different churches?

4. There are many of examples in the Bible of cases where God has created or commanded seemingly useless beauty. Why do you think God creates things that don't really seem to have any spiritual or practical purpose?

5. In what ways can art be a more effective method of communication than the written or spoken word alone?

6. How do you think art communicates? Mind to mind? Spirit to spirit? Discuss.

7. 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 indicates that spiritual gifts won't be required in heaven because we'll see God face to face. Revelation 15:2-3 indicates that we will be using our artistic gifts to praise and worship God in heaven. What does this tell us about our creative gifts?

“Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.”
1 Corinthians 13:8-10

“And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given them by God and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvellous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages.” Revelation 15:2-3

8. Check out Genesis 1:27 & 31. Why was God's creation "good"? What made it good? What justified it as a good thing? What purpose did it serve?

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them... God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day.” Genesis 1:27&31

9. One of the reasons for God's creation seems to be to show how good He is. What does our creativity reveal about us?

10. Do you believe that art is valuable or important? Why?

Day 2 – Why be good at art?

1. What is “art”? What makes something artistic?

2. Check out Romans 1:20. What does what God has created tell us about Himself? How does it communicate this message?

“For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.” Romans 1:20

3. Read Isaiah 40:25-31. Why did God make everything so great? What does God’s creation show us about Him? How does this relate to our art?

"To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One. Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing. Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God"? Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." *Isaiah 40:25-31*

4. What does our creativity reveal about God? How? Why do you think we should strive for excellence?

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5. Read the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30. How can we relate this to maximising the gifts that God has given us?

"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' "The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' "Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. "'Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' (Matthew 25:14-30)

6. But what if you're not Picasso or Charlie Parker yet? What does Mark 12:41-44 have to say about what is really important?

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow

has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything--all she had to live on." (Mark 12:41-44)

7. Check out 2 Samuel 23:1-2. David is remembered for his art. Described as being anointed by God, a singer of songs. Discuss how creativity and spirituality are connected. How did David use his spiritual and artistic gifts together? Discuss.

These are the last words of David: "The oracle of David son of Jesse, the oracle of the man exalted by the Most High, the man anointed by the God of Jacob, Israel's singer of songs. "The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue. 2
Samuel 23:1-2

8. Read 1 Chronicles 28:21, Exodus 35:26, Exodus 36:2 and 1 Chronicles 25:6-7. Discuss the link between being gifted, skilled, willing and doing. What does this infer that people who are blessed with talents and abilities should do with them?

"The divisions of the priests and Levites are ready for all the work on the temple of God, and every willing man skilled in any craft will help you in all the work. The officials and all the people will obey your every command." 1 Chronicles 28:21

"And all the women who were willing and had the skill spun the goat hair." Exodus 35:26

"Then Moses summoned Bezalel and Oholiab and every skilled person to whom the LORD had given ability and who was willing to come and do the work." Exodus 36:2

"All these men were under the supervision of their fathers for the music of the temple of the LORD, with cymbals, lyres and harps, for the ministry at the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun and Heman were under the supervision of the king. Along with their relatives--all of them trained and skilled in music for the LORD--they numbered 288". 1
Chronicles 25:6-7

9. Psalm 33:1-4 encourages us to play skilfully when praising God? Why is it important to give God our best?

Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him. Praise the LORD with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre. Sing to him a new song; play skilfully, and shout for joy. For the word of the LORD is right and true; he is faithful in all he does. Psalm 33:1-4

10. Proverbs 22:29 and 1 Chronicles 15:22 tell us that skill can bring power and influence. Think of some examples of people who have exercised their skill. How have they influenced their world? Why do we listen to skilful people?

“Kenaniah the head Levite was in charge of the singing; that was his responsibility because he was skilful at it.” *1 Chronicles 15:22*

“Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings; he will not serve before obscure men.” *Proverbs 22:29*

11. Music and the arts seemed to play an important part in the spiritual gatherings in the Old Testament as it does in our gatherings today. If you're going to get into a position of leadership using your arts, what else do you think you have a responsibility to develop other than your artistic skill? Why?

12. How then should we go about developing our artistic potential? Think about some steps that you can take to develop your artistic and spiritual gifts to glorify God.

Day 3 – Shining your light

1. Where do you generally do you art? At school/uni? At church? Or in the secular scene?

2. Jesus related to all sorts of people in a variety of different situations. How did Jesus' method of communication change for the different audiences he related to? How did his message differ? What can we learn from this?

3. Do you think artistic gifts are spiritual gifts or do they express spirituality? Discuss.

4. What should be our aim when creating art? Consider again the Christian bumper sticker art from day 1.

5. If you're a Christian doing your art in the secular world, how can you make sure you keep growing in your faith?

6. If you're doing your art mostly in the church, what can you do to make sure that you stay in touch with the people that God wants us to reach (refer Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 4:18-19, Mark 16:15 & Matt 10:16)?

“Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." Luke 4:18&19

"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation." Mark 16:15

"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves." Mathew 10:16

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As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and "sinners"?" On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick." *Matthew 9:9-12*

12. What does Philippians 2:12-16 and Matthew 5:13-16 tell us about witnessing for Christ in the real world?

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"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to

everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” *Matthew 5:13-16*

13. Talk about where you think God wants you to shine your light. What might be challenges in you doing this? Pray for each other.
