

The Calling and the Responsibility of the Artist

You are here at SPA for varying reasons, some to dance, some to act, some to paint and some to write, while all of you are here trying to discover God's calling on you specifically as an artist and how that calling is to be walked out.

For some that calling is vocational while for others it is seasonal. Some of you feel called to the arts for life while others may feel their greatest passion is ministry or business or education. I share that tug in understanding your call.

My life as the artistic business-minded pastor.

- Point: Discovering your call for the season you are in

But we are all here to build the house of God through our craft and learn how to bring the prophetic into our creative process while discovering what it looks like to carry that gift outside these four walls and impact culture through the arts.

I first want to address what the calling and responsibility of the artist within the Church and then speak to the aspect of overflowing through the arts in our communities by addressing the divine intervention for the creative process.

- A lot to cover in 55 minutes but I think we can do it!

Exodus 31:1-6

"See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works. . . . And I, indeed I, have appointed with him Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan" (Exodus 31:1, 6).

verses 34 and 35: "And He has put in his heart the ability to teach, in him and Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. He has filled them with skill to do all manner of work."

Did you know that in all of the Old Testament there is no other place than this scripture that it says someone was FILLED with the Holy

Spirit? There are many times where the Scriptures say the Spirit was with or upon prophets, priests and kings, **but the ONLY person filled with the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament was an artist.**

What is the significance of this?

Why were the arts so important to God that He sent the Holy Spirit, the helper, to teach and direct the building of the tabernacle?

Look at this.

Ever think genealogies are boring and skip over them? Yeah, me too.

The Lord called by name Bezalel. His name means "in the shadow of God." He is the son of Uri, which means "fiery, flame, light, or make luminous." Uri is the son of Hur, which means "white." They are of the tribe of Judah, which has the meaning "praise."

Side note: King David and Jesus came out of the line of Bezalel. (1 Chronicles 2:20)

Aholiab means "the tent or tabernacle of a father." It is not too much to assume that he also was filled with the Spirit of God. He is the son of Ahisamach, which means "brother of support, to lean upon, sustain, helper." *The artist's helper comes with the ability to judge or discern, and can be counted upon for support.*

Bezalel, in the shadow of God, in the context of praise, and his helper Aholiab, who is a supporter, sustainer, a type of the Holy Spirit, the Discerner.

Why did God call Bezalel by name? Scriptures do not say he was the most qualified, the most gifted, the most trained.

He was chosen because he brought praise through his work. He remained in the shadow of God.

Could it be that the calling of the artist was so important to God that He wanted to emphasize that His house, the tabernacle, reflected His beauty and who He was?

Could it be that His beauty was of such importance that it would speak to people in ways that prophets, priests and kings

couldn't and for such implications, God chose to send the Holy Spirit to reside with these two as they built the temple?

This is what I believe is the calling of the artist.

Creating art that speaks light into darkness, imparts wisdom, understanding and knowledge and reflects the beauty of Our Creator as Heaven invades Earth.

This is why you are in SPA.

Proverbs 23:23

²³ Buy the truth, and do not sell it, Also wisdom and instruction and understanding.

Notice: the same thing Bezalel was filled with for artistic works.

You are here to buy truth.

The creative process does not begin by looking at the world's standards of what good art is and then try to bring a Christian bent to it, but **your responsibility as an artist begins by creating beauty where beauty does not exist.**

That beauty teaches.

That beauty imparts wisdom.

That beauty brings understanding and knowledge.

Deacon James Bryant in **The Christian Artist in the World:**

The creation of beauty is not an arbitrary and capricious process subject to the eye of the beholder or to the eye of the artist. Beauty is the result of an intentional effort to bring forth a work in conformance with the revealed order of creation and the nature of the Creator, an effort which transfigures ordinary elements and subject matter into a higher spiritual dimension.

Seven times in the first chapter of Genesis God looks upon what He has created and says "it is good." The literal connotation of the word used means beautiful.

In her book, ***The Artistic Unity of the Russian Orthodox Church***, Jane Merriam de Vyve writes, "***There is the lively***

awareness that beauty imitates the divine nature; that to create beauty is to imitate the divine activity; and that to be a lover of beauty is to be a lover of God."

What is defining our definition of beautiful today?

Where do we find our inspiration?

What do we do when inspiration is waning?

If true beauty is to imitate the divine nature, what does it look like then to create that kind of beauty?

We call God our Creator as He formed us. He created us in His image and then called us beautiful.

As artists, we are creators.

We have the ability to create beauty to the same magnitude that God created it in, but that ability is a choice.

That ability begins by looking inward and asking, God what responsibility have you given me as an artist?

What's my story?

What have you made beautiful to me?

The problem with most Christian art is that we've become cyclical in style and lack originality to develop our own approach to creating art.

We see what works well for another church and try copying that.

We try to mimic pop culture and make sure to throw in a "Jesus" here and there.

We have lost our influence because we have disbanded our responsibility as artists to CREATE beauty.

The Divine Intervention for the Creative Process

This is where the divine intervention for the creative process comes in.

Why is it that we have access to the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth yet we look to what others have done for our inspiration and input as what is good art or what is bad art?

We make art every week that asks people to reflect on and consider their own stories. And if we aren't willing to do the same, our art will lack the truth and authenticity that we're

asking from our audience.

What this produces is a shallow form of art that attempts to tell a story but lacks depth or believability.

We can only take our audience to the depth that we ourselves have journeyed.

Our greatest inspiration is our testimonies.

Beauty is in painting a picture of God as one who sees us in the image He created us in.

- This cannot be replicated. It cannot be copied because it is personal.

- Your story though can be painted, it can be portrayed, it can be written because it is your divine nature being emanated through your paintbrush or guitar strings.

Blaine Hogan in *The Artist As the New Pastor*: **We are resigned to thinking our role is mere utility. We've believed the lie that the beauty we make could never evoke someone to a higher place. And more will continue to do so unless you claim your call to reveal the beauty in the broken places and raise your prophetic voice.**

How do we know where those broken places are?

- Listen to the voice of our community; it is constantly speaking, how are we listening?

The Church desires to have answers for our community's problems, but if we are not listening to the heart cry of our community then how can we expect them to hear the answer through our art.

- We are answering in Chinese when they asked for help in English

Divine intervention begins when we take the time to listen.

- Holy Spirit, where are you moving?

- What are you working on in me?

Write down every emotion, every thought, every feeling.

Write down the themes you read in the headlines of the paper.

Write down the themes you hear from Sunday morning.

What are these themes?

What are the patterns you are seeing?

What about these patterns drives you, motivates you, keeps you up at night?

This is the Holy Spirit awakening something inside of you.

He is your helper, he is your Aholiab. USE HIM.

You are the shadow of God, you usher in praise. You build the tabernacle.

The Holy Spirit is here to judge, here to discern.

So, don't be afraid to FAIL!

Failure is a greater teacher than success because it enables you to grow.

Art & Fear by David Bayles:

The function of the overwhelming majority of your artwork is simply to teach you how to make the small fraction of your artwork that soars. One of the basic and difficult lessons every artist must learn is that even the failed pieces are essential.

SHOW VIDEO

They begin to hear something new.

They find something only they can find.

There is something that is waiting to come out, a story only you can tell with only your voice, and it is closer than you think.

Don't be afraid to wrestle with it for out of it will come something truly beautiful.