

22 May 2005
Our Church's Values - Creativity

Scene 1.

I was thinking the other day about some of my most meaningful and peaceful times with God. It occurred to me that some of those times have been in Chapels & churches of other Christian denominations. I actually have some favourite Chapels that I have visited.

The chapel at the Royal Military College Duntroon in Canberra has a lot of meaning for me as a place of solitude and rest. That might have been because I attended there in the middle of my Basic officer training and it was a Safe place away from the rigours of stuff that I wasn't used too or fit enough for. The chapel at Enoggera is also a place where I can easily focus on spending time with God. But my favourite chapel is the one at Latchford Barracks near Albury Wodonga. The Chapel of St Peter & St Paul is a large building with very high ceilings and some nice artwork & banners on the wall and the stage area has a glass wall behind it that looks into an enclosed garden. The combination of the architecture, the artwork, gardens and the size and stillness of the chapel all make it a place that lends itself to helping you spend time with God I have derived great benefit from contemplative times in that chapel. And I have to admit that the artwork & the building design are all creative elements that assist me to focus on God. So in a few moments I am going to ask you what places and artwork have helped you to contemplate God?

Some of the most effective outreaches in the world at the moment make extensive use of art. Logosdor, a not for profit Christian Multimedia company based here in Australia, has been involved in some enormous projects throughout the world where live stage plays have literally been played to entire stadiums of people.

Many have become Christians. The Wesley Mission in Sydney has it's own arts college for the teaching and reclaiming of the arts for Christianity. A couple of years ago I watched the Sydney Christmas Carols on TV. It was brilliant. In Queensland huge Easter events are being staged in many locations. The evangelical church has rediscovered the arts and we are even beginning to discover that artwork on the walls and even stained glass windows can actually help people to focus on God. So I ask you what places and artwork have helped you to contemplate God?

RESPONSES

Scene 2.

The evangelical church is slowly getting rid of its iconic phobia and realising that creativity is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

You see in the past we have rightly reacted to many of the heresies where people have been lead away from worshipping God and they have ended up worshipping a created object. The practice centuries ago where an indulgence, some artefact, was sold and gave some sort of guarantee that the buyer would get to heaven was just plain wrong and a greedy attempt to make money by the church. In many cases there were enough pieces of the cross-sold to build Noah's ark.

Such ridiculous practices have driven the evangelical church and Baptist churches in particular to reject all forms of artwork or symbolic items for fear that people might be led to worship or pray to the created object rather than God and in so doing commit idolatry. Now fortunately we are beginning to realise that this reaction has left us with plain buildings and has caused us to miss out on a rich and highly meaningful avenue for people to get in touch with God. The pendulum has swung from one side right across to the other and we are beginning to see a balance come back.

Creativity and the arts are all right; in fact they are a gift from God. We just need to use them as an aid to our worship of God instead of as a replacement.

Scene 3.

But we still have some way to go before we are really comfortable with the Holy Spirit's creativity. Here too the pendulum is beginning to move back towards the middle. Good theology is beginning to out way reaction to the excesses and aggressive insistence of some that they have the secret and the rest of us are somehow inferior. You see we need to understand that the Scriptures say that in regard to the gifts of the Holy Spirit

Each one is gifted differently for building up and doing ministry. 1 Cor 12:4-11, 1 Cor 14:26.

READ 1 COR 12:4-11. Now very simply this passage is saying two things. Firstly God gives different gifts to different people and it is entirely his decision who gets what gifts. Secondly the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given for the sole purpose of building up the body of Christ, that is the church, so that the church will grow in maturity and ability to take the message of Jesus to the world. No one is better than another because of the gift that they have, we have different roles & responsibilities in accordance with our gifting

and spiritual maturity.

1 Cor 12:12-29 is very clear on this point (also Cor 14:1-25)

READ 1 COR 12: 31b- 13:3 The central point is to love, because it doesn't matter what gift or ability you have. If you don't truly love the family of God the Scriptures are very clear, the great things you think you contribute are really nothing at all! Real creativity, the creativity that comes as a result of being in fellowship with the Spirit of God is made real in the church and the community only when we serve with love. Love means that we build a culture of having a go and allowing the Holy Spirit to work. When we do that we will not only be a church where creativity is encouraged, we will also be a church where people hear God speaking to them in a medium they can understand. For some that will be music, for others drama, for others the spoken word, for others multimedia and for others meditation, stillness, and works of art.

Creativity and Innovation is nothing to be scared of when it is encouraged in an atmosphere of love and submission to the word of God. (1 Cor 14:22-40) Now there is just so much more that we could go into in these passages in 1 Corinthians and other places about the Scriptural commands as to the appropriate use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the indwelling power of the Spirit. But that is a topic for a different series, today we are focusing on one of the values that this church will be known for and that is creativity.

You see the core values that we have been working through over the past few weeks are all about this one thing and that is

Scene 4.

The church best communicates God's love and the message of salvation when we use God's method. READ EPH 4:1-16 God's method is simply this; The gifts of the Holy Spirit are given for the common good, they are to be used in a spirit of humility and service of our brothers and sisters and the wider community. To prepare and build up the church to serve, to demonstrate God's love in many and varied ways. So that people come to know the Lord. So that we all grow into maturity and stay the course, not wavering or falling away from the Lord but completing the journey of life with him leading the way.

Scene 5.

So the question remains, what communicates God's love to you?

Could it be that this is an indication of how God has gifted you to communicate his love to others?

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